

# A History of Tamil Literature

Mu. Varadarajan



Sahitya Akademi



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The sculpture reproduced on the end paper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Śuddhodana the dream of Queen Māyā, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D

*Courtesy:* National Museum, New Delhi.

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Mu. Varadarajan

*Translated from Tamil by*

E. Sa. Visswanathan



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# Preface

With the exception of Sanskrit, Tamil is the only language in India, with a hoary past and a rich tradition of literary history. It reveals the commingling of cultures comparable to that of a garland of flowers of many hue. In spite of the fusion of cultures everyone could perceive the distinctive features of the Tamil language and literature and enjoy their beauty, which form the basis of the Dravidian culture.

The literary world knows the uniqueness of the *Caṅkam* classics. One of the twin epics, the *Cilappatikāram*, bewitched the minds of many scholars. The *Tirukkuraḷ*, an ethical work, and the *Tiruvācakam*, a collection of devotional songs, won the hearts of many literary critics even in their translations both in oriental and occidental languages. One could comprehend the quintessence of *Śaiva Siddhāntā* philosophy and the philosophy of *Vaiṣṇavism* only through the media of Tamil literature and culture. It is, therefore, imperative that one should be familiar with the history of Tamil literature.

The Sahitya Akademi invited the eminent scholar and professor of Tamil, Mu. Varadarajan, to write the history of Tamil literature. He is an erudite scholar in Tamil language and literature. He distinguished himself as a professor, who could convey lucidly the essential features of Tamil literature to students as well as to common people. Himself a creative writer of repute, he received the Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel in Tamil. He is one among those few scholars, who could enjoy reading the entire gamut of Tamil literature: the ancient, the mediaeval and the modern periods.

Such a scholar has written *A History of Tamil Literature (Tamiḷ Ilakkiya Varalāru)* in his own inimitable style. This work will remain as a priceless offering not merely to the intellectual world but to the people of India.

Madurai  
1 October 1970

Professor T.P. Meenakshisundaran





# Translator's Note

Professor Mu. Varadarajan's History of Tamil Literature appeared as one of Sahitya Akademi's prestigious publications in Tamil in 1972. In translating it into English I have tried to recapture the spirit in which the illustrious author wrote the book. To do justice to the erudite Tamil scholar, the well-known writer and above all the intellect noted for his unbiased views, I have taken special care to keep the translation as close to the original as possible. However a few minor changes have been made here and there in this version for reasons of cogency, flow of style and readability.

I have translated into English most of the Tamil poems quoted in the original in the form of free verse without sacrificing their meaning and spirit. At the end of each chapter bibliographical details are given to most of the quotations used in the original. In addition a select list of works published in English on various aspects of Tamil language and literature, tradition and culture, is included for the benefit of those who want to know more about Tamil language and literature.

The transliteration of Tamil words is based on the system of the Madras University Tamil Lexicon, which is the accepted standard now-a-days among specialists. However, for the sake of uniformity most of the place names like Madurai, caste names like Iyer, Mudaliar, etc., well known historical names like Pandya, names of famous literary works like Rāmāyaṇa and their characters are written as they are commonly spelt now.

My thanks are due to Dr. R. Ramalingam, Department of Tamil at the University of Madras, for collecting references to many poetical and prose quotations used in the work; Professor C. Balasubramaniam, Professor of Tamil, University of Madras, for providing reference facilities and to Mr. Baradas Gopal, Deputy Librarian at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, for sending xerox copies of references I needed for this work. I must not forget to express my grateful thanks to my wife Vasanthakumari for patiently checking and rechecking the diacritical marks.

*Guyana,  
South America  
29 May 1987*

**E. Sa. Visswanathan**





# Abbreviations used in References

AN	<i>Akanāṇūru</i>
c	chapter
CT	<i>Cuntarar Tēvāram</i>
K	<i>Kuraḷ</i>
KT	<i>Kuṟuntokai</i>
NT	<i>Naṇacampantar Tēvāram</i>
NTP	<i>Nālāyirat-tiviyap-pirapantam</i>
pm	poem
pms	poems
PN	<i>Puraṇāṇūru</i>
Tm	<i>Tiruvācakam</i>
TT	<i>Tirumūlar Tirumantiram</i>
TTm	<i>Tirunāvukkaracar Tēvāram</i>

# Scheme of Transliteration

(Adopted from the Tamil Lexicon)

## Vowels

அ	ஆ	இ	ஈ	உ	ஊ	எ	ஏ	ஐ	ஒ	ஓ	ஔ	ஃ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e	ē	ai	o	ō	au	k

## Consonants

க	ங்	ச	ஞ்	ட்	ண்	த்	ந்	ப்
k	ṅ	c	ñ	t	ṇ	t	n	p
ம்	ய்	ர்	ல்	வ்	ழ்	ள்	ற்	ன்
m	y	r	l	v	ḷ	ḷ	r	ṇ
ஜ	ஸ்	ஷ்	ஹ்	க்ஷ				
j	s	ś	h	kṣ				

## for vowel-consonants

க	கா	கி	கீ	கு	கூ	கெ	கே
ka	kā	ki	kī	ku	kū	ke	kē
கை	கொ	கோ	கௌ				
kai	ko	kō	kau				

A similar scheme should be followed for other vowel-consonants also:

ங்	ச	ஞ்		ண்	த்	ந்	ப்
ṅa	ca	ña	ṭa	ṇa	ta	na	pa
ம்	ய்	ர்	ல்	வ்	ழ்	ள்	ற்
ma	ya	ra	la	va	ḷa	ḷa	ra
ன	ஜ	ஸ்	ஷ்	ஹ்	க்ஷ		
ṇa	ja	sa	śa	ha	kṣa		

## Tamil Language

### *Old Dravidian*

In the historical past Proto-Dravidian was spoken throughout India. When the Turanians and the Aryans came to India through the Khyber and the Bolan Passes respectively, and mingled with the local population of the North, the North Indian languages of Proto-Dravidian origin changed to a great extent. As a consequence Prākṛit and Pāli emerged as the languages of the masses in the northern part of India. Despite the commingling of local and foreign ethnic elements, a section of Proto-Dravidians maintained their ethnic and cultural identity in some isolated areas, spoke corrupt forms of Proto-Dravidian languages and these have survived, to this day, as living examples of ancient Dravidian languages. Languages such as Kolami, Parji, Naiki, Gondi, Ku, Kuvi, Konda, Malta, Oroan, Gadba, Khurukh, and Brahui are examples of Dravidian languages prevalent in the North. Today Proto-Dravidian speakers are increasingly mingling with other linguistic groups and learning their languages. Therefore, their numerical strength is on the decline. People living in the Rajmahal mountains in Bengal and in the areas adjacent to Chota Nagpur are good examples of the intermingling. A section of people living in Baluchistan speak Brahui, which has many linguistic features similar to the Dravidian languages spoken in South India. Scholars are surprised today to note many linguistic similarities between Tamil and Brahui, especially in numerals, personal pronouns, syntax and in other linguistic



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features. The Indian Census report of 1911 classified Brahui as a language belonging to the Dravidian family. It was then spoken by about 170,000 people, although this number over the years dwindled to a couple of thousands. Whatever be their numerical strength now, they are proof of the fact that the Dravidians in some age of the historical past were spread in the region between Baluchistan and Bengal and spoke the Proto-Dravidian idiom.

### *North Indian Languages*

Since the Dravidians lived throughout the Indian subcontinent at some historical past, certain syntactical affinities are noticeable even today between the South and a large number of North Indian languages.

When Prakrit and Pali became popular in the North, the Proto-Dravidian language lost its ground there, and confined itself entirely to the South. Even in South India it did not remain as one single language for a long time. Dialectical differences arose partly due to the political division of the Tamil country into three distinct Tamil kingdoms and partly due to the natural barriers created by rivers and mountains. The absence of proper land communication among the three Tamil kingdoms also accentuated this process of dialectal differences. As a result the Dravidian language spoken by the people, who lived in the regions north and south of the Tirupati mountains, varied to such an extent as to become two independent languages, Tamil and Telugu. The language spoken in the region of Mysore came to be known as Kannada. Malayalam emerged as yet another distinct language in Kerala. All these far-reaching changes occurred at different periods of time in the history of the Dravidian languages. Among these four languages, it is only the Tamil language which has a long literary tradition.

The term Dravidian, which refers to the language of South India, is of a later origin. Originally it was derived from the word *tamil*. This word in course of time changed into *dravida* after undergoing a series of changes like *tamiḷa*, *tramīḷa*, *tramiṭa*, *trapida* and *travida*. At one time the languages spoken in the regions of Karnataka, Kongu and Malabar were respectively known as *Karunāṭṭut-tamil*, *Tuḷunāṭṭut-tamil* and *Malaināṭṭut-tamil*. Today however, these regional languages are classified under the blanket term 'Dravidian family of languages'

### South Indian Languages

Many common linguistic features are still discernible among these Dravidian languages. Some five thousand words are common to these languages. Many grammatical forms are common. The overwhelming influence of Sanskrit scholars and the indiscriminate borrowing of Sanskrit words resulted in the emergence of Kannada and Telugu as distinct languages from Tamil some fifteen hundred years ago. The influence of Sanskrit on Malayalam language came to be felt only about eight centuries ago, and therefore, the areas of difference between Tamil and Malayalam are not many. Tamil was the language of bureaucracy, of literati and of culture for several centuries in Kerala. In fact, fifteen centuries ago the rulers of Kerala were all Tamils. Up to the tenth century the Pāṇḍya kings ruled Kerala with royal titles such as 'Perumāṅkaḷ' and 'Perumāḱkaṇmar'. It was a Tamil poet from Trivandrum who in fact presided over the academy of Tamil scholars, when they met to evaluate the famous Tamil grammatical work *Tolkāppiyam*. From the third century B.C. to the first century A.D., many poets from Kerala composed poems in Tamil and their compositions are included in Tamil anthologies such as *Akanāṇūru* and *Puranāṇūru*. All the one hundred poems in the anthology *Patirrupattu* extol the greatness of the kings of the Kerala region. The author of the famous Tamil epic, *Cilappatikāram*, was a poet from Kerala. The shrine in honour of Kaṇṇaki, the heroine of *Cilappatikāram*, was built at Tiruvaṅcikkulam in Kerala. Among the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava composers, Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇār and Kulaṇṇakara Ālvār respectively, belong to the Kerala region. Aiyaṇāritanār, the author of the tenth century grammatical work *Purapporuḷ Venpāmālai*, hailed from Kerala. Many scholars and pundits from Kerala contributed much to the Tamil language and literature and the historical evidence shows that the region now known as the State of Kerala was once an integral part of Tamil Nadu at some period of time. Because of these reasons there is greater affinity between Tamil and Malayalam than between Tamil and Kannada or Telugu.

### Contact with Foreign Countries

Tamil occupies a distinctive position among the Dravidian languages owing to its geographical expansion, for it has spread beyond the frontiers of India. Apart from being the language of forty million people in Tamil Nadu it is the spoken and written

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language of several millions of Tamils living in Ceylon, Burma, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Africa, Fiji Islands and Mauritius.

That the Tamils were well advanced in sea-borne and inland trade is evident both from Tamil literary sources as also from the accounts of foreign travellers.\* Even as early as the tenth century B.C., articles of trade such as peacock feathers, elephant tusks and spices intended for King Solomon were sent in ships belonging to the Tamil country. Some words in Hebrew, Greek and English point to the existence of trade between Tamil Nadu and the countries around the Mediterranean region. Classical Hebrew terms like *tuki* and *ahalat* are close to the Tamil words *tōkai* and *akil* respectively. Although English words like 'sandalwood' and 'rice' are borrowed from the Greek language, their origin is in fact Tamil. Likewise the Greek words for ginger and pepper also owe their origin to Tamil. Sea-borne trade flourished between the Tamil country and the Roman Empire during the period of Emperor Augustus. This fact is borne out by numerous coins issued during his reign, which were unearthed by archaeologists in the Tamil country. Iron age finds in Philippines also point to the existence of trade between Tamil Nadu and the Philippine Islands during the ninth and tenth centuries B.C. This apart, Tamil traders frequented the shores of Burma, Malaya and China with their wares and bartered them for Chinese silk and sugar. The Tamil word *cīni* for sugar indicates its origin. In Tamil classical works, Chinese silk is referred to as *cīnattuppaṭṭu*.

Foreigners who toured India gave an account of the flourishing trade between the Tamil regions of India and other countries. Periplus and Pliny mention that since articles from Tamil Nadu such as pearls, elephant tusks and muslin were bartered for gold, and that the trade balance was more in favour of the Tamils, the Emperor Vespasian viewed especially the drain of gold as a serious threat to his country's economy and took the extreme step of terminating the two-way trade between Rome and the Tamil country. References to the ports of trade in the Tamil country such as Tonṭi, Muciṛi, Kōrkai and Kāviriṇṇampattinam are also found in the writings of Periplus. Ptolemy writing in A.D. 150 speaks about

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\* For an interesting account of the ancient Tamils refer, P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamil from the Earliest Times to 600 A.D.*, Madras, 1929, pp. 36-43.; and A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, London, 1954, p. 62.



Cēras, Cōlas and Pāṇdyas as the rulers of Tamil Nadu. He also mentions the important trading centres like Karur, Nagappattinam and Pondicherry in his travel notes. All these references to the trading activities of the Tamils in foreign writings correlate to those found in the early Tamil classics.

The business acumen of the Tamils is shown in the special terms used by them to refer even to the minutest fractions in calculation. To cite some examples, the term *immi* referred to the fraction of  $1/320 \times 1/7$ . And one-seventh of this fraction was termed as *aṇu*. One-eleventh of an *aṇu* was known as *mummi* and one ninth of a *mummi* was termed *kuṇam*.

The renowned Sanskrit epics the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata also speak about the Tamil country and in particular the importance of Madurai as the capital of the Pāṇḍya kings. Megasthenes, who came to India during the period of Chandragupta Maurya, refers to the Pāṇḍya country and its polity. The edicts of the famous Indian Emperor Asoka also mention that during his rule the Tamil kings in the far south of India enjoyed political independence.

### *Antiquity of Tamil Grammatical Works*

Among the ancient grammatical works available, the *Tolkāppiyam* was the earliest and it was written around the third century B.C. There are over two hundred and fifty references in *Tolkāppiyam* which, provide substantial evidence of the existence of many classical and grammatical works in Tamil prior to *Tolkāppiyam* itself. It classifies Tamil words into four categories, *iyarcol*, *tiricol*, *ticaiccol*, and *vaṭacol*. *Iyarcol* refers to the words in common use, while *tiricol* refers to the words used specifically in poetry. Regional words are known as *ticaiccol*. Words borrowed from Sanskrit are called *vaṭacol*. Certain specific rules were stipulated in borrowing words from Sanskrit. The borrowed words were to strictly conform to the Tamil phonetic system and to be written in the Tamil script. All these indicate the sound grammatical basis on which the Tamil language has evolved over the years.

Besides, *Tolkāppiyam* also classifies the Tamil language into *centamiḷ* and *koṭuntamiḷ*. The former refers to the classical Tamil used exclusively by literati in their works and the latter refers to the colloquial Tamil, spoken by the people. This shows that even in those distant days differences had grown to such an extent as

to enable the Tamil grammarians to classify the language into written and spoken.

### Tamil Scripts

The earlier Tamil inscriptions were written in brāhmī, grantha and *vaṭṭeluttu* scripts.\* Inscriptions after the seventh century A.D. contain Tamil characters similar to the one now in vogue. This prompted some scholars to argue that *vaṭṭeluttu* and Tamil scripts originated from brāhmī scripts. This view has no solid base, for one can see a copious description of Tamil scripts in *Tolkāppiyam*, which belongs to third century B.C. It is obvious therefore, that Tamil language had a distinct script of its own even at that early period. In fact *vaṭṭeluttu* is none other than the old Tamil script. Even the southern brāhmī was a corrupt form of *vaṭṭeluttu*. Distinct differences exist between the southern and the northern brāhmī script, for the southern one had its genesis in *vaṭṭeluttu*. Much before brāhmī scripts could become popular the Tamils possessed a script of their own, which they put to use in their commercial transactions and in their writings.

The Tamil characters which are in use today also can be deemed to have originated from *vaṭṭeluttu*. There are twelve vowels in Tamil consisting of five short vowels, a, i, u, e, and o (அ, இ, உ, ஏ, ஓ); their corresponding five long vowels, ā, ī, ū, ē, and ō (ஆ, ஈ, ஊ, ஏ, ஓ) and two letters *ai* and *au* (ஐ, ஔ) for the prevention of hiatus. There are eighteen consonants made up of six surds k, c, ṭ, t, p, and r, (க, ச, ட, த, ப, ற) and their corresponding six sonants ṅ, ñ, ṇ, n, m, and ṁ (ங், ஞ், ண், ந், ம், ன்) and six medials y, r, l, v, ḷ, and ḻ (ய், ர், ல், வ், ழ், ள்). The

\* According to Professor M. Varadarajan, *vaṭṭeluttu* was nothing but the scripts inscribed on stones. They had been known as *veṭṭeluttu* or letters inscribed on stones, but in course of time and by usage it was transformed into *vaṭṭeluttu*. For an indepth study of Tamil scripts refer, M. Varadarajan, *Moli Varalāru* (The History of Tamil Language), Madras, 1954, pp. 425-437. The view of a historian on the same subject is as follows: "What the *vaṭṭeluttu* is and how it came into being and how it was practised we cannot say definitely. But we can say almost with some definiteness that it represents a very ancient cursive alphabet, perhaps the primitive South Indian alphabet which existed long, long before the inscriptions of Asoka." V.R.R. Dikshitar, *Pre-Historic South India*, Madras, 1951, p. 218. Yet for another view of the origins of Tamil scripts refer, John R. Marr, "The Early Dravidians", in A.L. Basham (ed.), *A Cultural History of India*, London, 1975, pp. 32-34.

two short vowels e and o ( எ, ஒ ), which are not in Devanagari, are essential to Tamil and other languages of the Dravidian family. There is a world of difference in meaning between the words *etu* and *ētu* ( எடு, ஏடு ); *koṭu* and *kōṭu* ( கொடு, கோடு ); *teḷ* and *tēḷ* ( தெள், தேள் ); as well as *kol* and *kōl* ( கொள், கோல் ). It is, therefore, needless to emphasise the importance of short and long vowels like e and ē ( எ, ஏ ); as well as o and ō ( ஒ, ஓ ) in Tamil. There are no aspirated consonants like ख, छ in Tamil. Likewise the letter h ( ஹ ) is also absent in Tamil. But a corresponding letter k ( க ), known as *āytam* is used to soften the surds in Tamil. The trilled consonant ṛ ( ற ) is quite different from r ( ர ). The consonant ṇ ( ண ) has a nasal sound and it is different from other dentals. The consonant ḷ ( ழ ) is equally essential like that of the consonant ழ ( ழ ). These two different ḷ's exist both in Telugu and in Kannada. The consonant ḷ ( ழ ) is found only in Tamil and Malayalam. It had existed in old Kannada but not now. The two vowels ru ( ரு ) and lu ( லு ), which are there in Devanagari, are not there in Tamil. The short-nature u ( உ ) and i ( இ ) sounds are in Tamil, but there are no letters to indicate them.

If the letters ka, ca, ṭa ta, pa, ( க, ச, ட, த, ப ) appear at the beginning of a word, after hard vowel consonants, and after doubling they will be pronounced like surds. In other places they will be pronounced like sonants. Although there are no distinct letters for surds and sonants in Tamil, the vowel consonants themselves are pronounced like surds and sonants depending on the place in which they appear. Therefore the one Tamil consonant ka ( க ) is pronounced like க depending upon its placement in a word. Likewise other hard vowel consonants ta ( த ), ca ( ச ), ṭa ( ட ) and pa ( ப ) are pronounced differently like ( த, ச, ட, ப ) respectively according to the place where they appear in a word.

There are no sibilants like श, ष, स in Tamil.

There are distinct letters in Tamil to indicate numerals and fractions. There are evidences to show that the present roman numerals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 originated from Tamil.

### Classification and Formation of Words

There are four kinds of words in Tamil. Among them the root words or *uriccol* which were used in ancient poems are not popular now. If we exclude them then there exist only three types of words, namely, nouns, verbs and *īṭaiccol* or particles.



The nouns indicate animate and inanimate categories of things, gender, number and person. *Tiṇai* is classified into *uyartiṇai* (nouns denoting personal class of beings, including men, gods and demons) and *akṛiṇai* (inferior class of beings whether animate, inanimate, or neuter). Higher categories of animate beings like human beings fall under *uyartiṇai*. Others, both animate and inanimate come under the category of *akṛiṇai*. There are three genders in *uyartiṇai*: masculine, feminine and neuter. *Palar pāl* or neuter plural gender indicates many in number. Masculine and feminine genders in Tamil indicate only singular number. *Akṛiṇai* is classified into *onṛaṇ pāl* (singular of the impersonal class) and *palviṇ pāl* (plural of the impersonal class).

Again, number is classified into one and many. Unlike Sanskrit there is no dual number in Tamil. There are three 'persons' in Tamil, namely, first person, second person and third person. Case inflexions are many in Tamil and their indicators form as suffixes in words.

Distinction between animate and inanimate things, and masculine and feminine genders are usually made according to the meaning of words.

Verbs are classified into finite and infinite verbs. Most of the finite verbs are formed with suffixes which indicates this animate or inanimate quality, as also gender. The gender is not distinguished both in abstract nouns and in relative participles. Both verbs and nouns are formed from verbal roots. But very few verbs are formed from noun roots.

Particles have no meaning of their own but acquire meaning when added to other words and help to differentiate their meanings too. Even meaningless words are regarded as particles.

Most of the words in Tamil are agglutinative in character, i.e. case indicators, time and gender markers are affixed to root words. As a result, the formation of words become clear. Even the words in the classical literature are agglutinative in character. There is no distinction between the roots that were used in ancient classics and those which are now in vogue. The root word which was used to mean 'food' in ancient classics was *uṇā*. The one used in medieval period was either *uṇ* or *uṇṭi*. Whereas the modern word for food is *uṇavu*. In all these words whether ancient, mediaeval or modern, the root word *un* is clear. Only the suffixes differ. Therefore, the Tamil of ancient poetry too begins to seem familiar after a while

if one reads the ancient classical poetry for a time. This is the reason why the Tamils of this century find little difficulty in understanding the *Cahkam* classics. It also accounts for the continuity that exists in Tamil literary growth. One finds it used in the poems of the hymnodists and Kampan, composed in the seventh century and the twelfth century respectively.

There is little difference in syntax between ancient and modern Tamil. Although over a period of time word forms have changed, the formation of syntax remains intact in all the Dravidian languages. In this respect there exist similarity between the languages of the South and the North, though they fall under a different category known as Indo-European languages. The fact that syntax changes very little, while other aspects of a language do, is brought out in the similarity one finds in the formation of syntax between the Dravidian languages of the South and the languages of the North of India. This explains why syntactical differences exist between the languages of North India on the one hand and Sanskrit, Greek and Latin on the other; and why there exists similarity between north and south Indian languages. This unity in syntactical formation becomes obvious if one analyses all the four major Dravidian languages of South India. If one analyses the continuous growth of Tamil language the perceivable truth is that there is little change in the formation of syntax both in the classical Tamil and the Tamil used in modern short stories.

### *Unnecessary Polemics*

Among the spoken languages of India, Tamil achieved perfection even during the pre-historic period. Literary growth in Tamil took place at the same time when there was similar growth in Sanskrit. Literary works came to be written only at a later period in all other Indian languages. Therefore there was considerable antiquity for Tamil language and literature. Besides, the ancient classical Tamil literature originated and blossomed from the folk song and poetry of the Tamil country. The forms of such poetry were also not borrowed from any other language, but were culled from the folk poetry and songs that was in vogue among the people of Tamil Nadu. The existence of such combination of antiquity and individuality in Tamil literature, was forgotten by later day Sanskrit scholars. As such they not merely denied the greatness due to the Tamil language but began to look upon it on the assump-

tion that it borrowed immensely from Sanskrit from its very inception. Therefore, Sanskritists indulged in unwanted polemics by arguing that Tamil had no intrinsic merit of its own because it borrowed heavily from Sanskrit. To establish this assumption, Cāmināta Desikar, a Sanskrit scholar and author of a grammatical work entitled *Ilakkaṇakkottu* compared the alphabets of Sanskrit and Tamil and found that all, except five alphabets, the two short vowels *ea* (e) and *o* (o) and three consonants *ra*, *ṇa* and *la* ( *ṛ*, *ṣ*, *ḷ* ) are common to both the languages. Therefore he argued that all the characters common to the two languages essentially belonged to Sanskrit and the five rare symbols which are absent in Sanskrit belonged specifically to Tamil. Based on his findings he wrote an unusual verse in which he posed insolently a question whether Tamil with only five letters of its own could ever be called a language.

Intelligent persons will be ashamed  
To call it a language  
That possesses only five letters.\*

This scurrilous verse only indicates the irrational attitude of the Sanskrit scholars of the seventeenth century.

Such unreasonable attitude became obvious in analysing the origin of words that were common to Sanskrit and Tamil. Basic words like *nīr* (water) and *mīṇ* (fish) which had been in use from time immemorial in Tamil language was interpreted by Sanskrit scholars as having originated from Sanskrit roots. They refused to consider the possibility that Sanskrit would have borrowed these common words from Tamil, the most ancient language of the region, and even propagated that most of the words in Tamil had been borrowed from Sanskrit. The Tamil scholars were perplexed by such unfounded claims. However with the arrival of linguists like Caldwell from Europe, and with the publication of books in English refuting the claims of Sanskritists, Tamil scholars gained confidence in the intrinsic value of Tamil language. Despite this, the biased views held by Sanskritists held sway in the world of letters even up to this century until linguists in England like Burrow falsified these erroneous claims by their researches. This controversy persisted even in analysing the names of places in the Tamil

\* Arumuka Navalar (ed.), *Ilakkaṇakkottu* (Madras), p. 9, lines 27-28.

region. After translating certain names of places from Tamil to Sanskrit, the Sanskrit scholars argued that they were borrowed from Sanskrit. One classic example was Vriddhachalam which is a literal translation of the Tamil place called Mutukunṅam. Likewise, several names of deities were translated into Sanskrit. The devotional hymns of the Nāyaṅmārs in fact mentioned these names in their pure Tamil form. Instances are not wanting that while translating names of places from Tamil into Sanskrit, the Sanskrit scholars failed to comprehend the real meaning of the original Tamil words and translated them erroneously. Without knowing the actual meaning of the name of a town Arkkātu (Arcot), the Sanskrit scholars translated it Ṣaṭāraṇyam, which literally means six forests, whereas the Tamil word *arkkātu* literally means a forest of fig trees. To perpetuate these Sanskritised names, they wrote stories as well. Despite their efforts Sanskritised names failed to gain currency among the people. The Sanskrit scholars, for example, tried to Sanskritise the name of the river Pālāru as Kṣra Nati. It could not be perpetuated. Thus the Sanskrit scholars unnecessarily sowed the seeds of dissension in the Tamil country.

#### *Taṇit-Tamil Iyakkam (Pure Tamil Movement)*

Sanskrit scholars attempted to Sanskritise Tamil several centuries ago by the liberal use of Sanskrit words. They argued that such a liberal mixture enhanced the beauty of the Tamil language and compared the hybrid language to an ornament made out of equal number of pearls and corals. They called the hybrid style as *maṇippravāḷa* style and attempted to popularize it in the country. Some of the Jain and Vaiṣṇava Sanskrit scholars employed that style using grantha scripts. Their attempts, however, failed because of the naturally rich vocabulary and literary wealth of the Tamil language.

Sanskrit scholars, however, refused to acknowledge the real merit of Tamil literary works. Although they were born in the Tamil country, spoke the Tamil language, and lived as Tamilians, they seldom read such important works as the *Tēvāram* and the *Tiruvācakam*. They treated lightly those who attained scholarship only in Tamil. Even the hymns of Nāyaṅmars, which found a pride of place in temple rituals during the Cōla period, lost their importance at a later stage. They went to the extent of denigrating Tamil as the language of the mortal and extolling Sanskrit as the language



of gods. If the Sanskritists found laudable ideas in Tamil works, they tried to belittle their merit saying that those were borrowed ideas from Sanskrit works. They tried even to underrate the importance of Tiruvaḷḷuvar's *Tirukkural* by running it down as a compendium of ideas translated from Sanskrit works. Likewise they considered that *Tolkāppiyam*, the first grammatical work by Tolkāppiyar, was based on Sanskrit. To substantiate their view, they assigned the work of Tolkāppiyar to Tiraṇatūmākkiṇi, who was a scholar in Sanskrit. The Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Purāṇas and other philosophical works were no doubt borrowed from Sanskrit but the Sanskrit scholars tried to camouflage the very existence of great literary works in Tamil like the *Caṅkam* classics, didactic and devotional literature. But their efforts were halted only when scholars like V.K. Cūriyanārāyaṇa Sastriar and Maṛaimalaiyaṭikaḷ focussed the attention of the people on the literary treasures of the Tamil language.

### *Two Different Types of Tamil Style*

Though the efforts to Sanskritise Tamil no longer exist, the repercussions of those earlier efforts are still felt in society. One effect, of course, was the virulent opposition to the use of Sanskrit words in Tamil, and this opposition has not subsided even today. At a time when all merit and greatness were attributed to Sanskrit alone, Tamil scholars like Cūriyanārāyaṇa Sastriar and Cuvāmi Vētācalam preferred to use only the Tamil equivalents of their Sanskrit names, Paritimarkalaiṇar and Maṛaimalaiyaṭikaḷ respectively. Despite their stance, their earlier Tamil prose works contained many words of Sanskrit origin. When the Sanskritists claimed that Tamil could not exist without Sanskrit, the two Tamil scholars addressed themselves to the task of writing Tamil without borrowing from Sanskrit. Cūriyanārāyaṇa Sastriar, the pioneer of this style of writing died at a very young age. His contemporary, Maṛaimalaiyaṭikaḷ lived longer and crystallized this attitude into a movement in 1916. Since then the movement has been popularly known as the *Taṇit-Tamil lyakkam* or the Pure Tamil Movement among the Tamil scholars. Its impact still persists among the Tamils. Those who have interest in maintaining the purity of Tamil language even now prefer to substitute a Tamil equivalent for Sanskrit names given by their parents. With vengeance they totally reject borrowings from Sanskrit. Instead they prefer to borrow from

English. The Tamil scholars consider it their duty to write in chaste Tamil free from Sanskrit and have been writing like this since the inception of the Pure Tamil Movement. The virulence of the movement was due to the past pride of the Sanskritists in their knowledge of Sanskrit language. The blunders committed by them have given rise to two different views as well as controversies in the use of Tamil. One group preferred to use as far as possible a pure Tamil without the admixture of Sanskrit words; others preferred to write in a hybrid language. Even now many writers of daily newspapers, weeklies and monthlies write in a hybrid language. Therefore the Tamil scholars denounce their writing as faulty. The writings of the Tamil scholars are criticised as too difficult to read, lifeless and artificial. Thus the effect of the old controversy still exists, although in a different form.

In the historic past, Sanskrit played the role of a communication language among the scholars, who lived in different parts of the Indian sub-continent. Therefore it was learnt avidly by scholars at Kanchipuram as well as at Banaras. The sum-total of human knowledge available from Kaveri to the Gangetic plains was written in the Sanskrit language. Ideas relating to literature, religion and theories of art were found elaborately set forth in Sanskrit. Many forget that quite a lot of authors of these Sanskrit works were scholars from South India. For example Daṇḍin the author of the *Kāvyādarśa* in Sanskrit, was a scholar from Kanchipuram in the Tamil country. Śaṅkara the exponent of Advaita philosophy, was again a South Indian. He mentioned in his works Saint Nāṇacampantar, the crusader against Jainism in South India. Rāmānujar, the originator of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy was a Tamilian and he lived very close to Kanchipuram. Scholars who analysed the life-style and arts of the people of the Tamil country, wrote many works on the Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra, the Carnatic music and on astrology. Therefore, if one considers these facts dispassionately, it was unrealistic on the part of later day Sanskrit scholars to denigrate Tamil language and literature. It is equally true in the case of Tamil scholars to think that theories and ideas found in Sanskrit were alien to Tamil.

The Tamil scholars took the cue from the old commentators for writing prose. The commentators including Parimēlaḷakar and others, who were known for their scholarship in Sanskrit, wrote in pure Tamil with the least borrowing from Sanskrit. Their style

of writing was similar to the one now in vogue, for the present-day Tamil scholars adopted only their style.

The journalists' style has been based on the spoken language of the Tamils. In spoken language, foreign loan words are mixed freely and syntax corresponds to emotional situations. Poet Pāra-tiyār composed poems largely in pure Tamil. He followed the same method while writing essays too.

Tiru. Vi. Kaliyaṇacuntarar moved very closely with Tamil scholars and journalists. He was himself a distinguished scholar and a seasoned journalist. He wrote many literary works and also edited a number of daily newspapers and weeklies. He was a link between the Tamil scholars and the journalist of his day. His earlier writings abound in Sanskrit words. With the advent of the Pure Tamil Movement, he began to write without the admixture of Sanskrit words. He used foreign words only when there were no suitable Tamil words to express a particular idea. He gave up long and stilted sentences and largely used emotionally charged short sentences common to spoken language. Thus his writings and speeches, tried to bridge the chasm that existed between the scholars and journalists. Even now two different types of styles exist: one adopted by the scholars and the other followed by the journalists.

### *Dialectical Conventions*

There exist slight regional differences in the spoken Tamil of the people living in various parts of the Tamil country. In the nineteenth century, in the absence of transport facilities, dialectical differences would have been more pronounced than it is now. Now they are on the decline because of increased transport and educational facilities. Besides mass-media, such as daily newspapers, journals, radio and television are also contributing factors. However, there are some differences between the Tamil spoken at Tirunelveli and Coimbatore. These two dialects differ distinctly from the Tamil spoken in Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli. The Tamil spoken in the city of Madras on the other hand differs from all of them, because of the liberal borrowing of words from Telugu, Urdu and English languages.

Similar differences exist in the phonetics also. The vowel consonant ca ( *ச* ) is distinctly pronounced in Tirunelveli, whereas in the northern part of Tamil Nadu it is pronounced as sa ( *சா* ) at

the beginning of words. The letter *la* ( ல ), which is unique to the Tamil language is pronounced differently from one district to another. In the southern districts it is pronounced as *la* ( ல ), in Salem as *ya* ( ய ) and in the city of Madras it is pronounced in both the ways. The verb *ilu* ( இழு ) is pronounced as *icu* ( இசு ). In spoken language *vālaippalam* ( வாழைப்பழம் ) is pronounced to the detestation of scholars as *vālapalam* ( வாளைப்பழம் ) and *Vāyappayam* ( வாய்ப்பயம் ). Certain classes of people pronounce the verb *irukki-ratu* (is) as *irukku*. Others pronounce it is *irukkutu* and the illiterates as *kītu*. The verb *ceyuvittār* (has done it) is pronounced in spoken language as *ceyñcittār*, *cēncittār* and *cēnciputtār*. Likewise the verb *eṭuttukkoṇṭān* (has taken it) is pronounced as *eṭuttuk-kinān*, *eṭuttuknān*, and *eṭuttukkiṭṭān*.

Some words have altogether a different meaning in the Tamil used in Sri Lanka. The known meaning for the word *ārutalāka* is comforting. But in Sri Lanka 'calmly' and 'leisurely' (*amaitiyāka* and *kālatāmatamāka*). The Tamils in Sri Lanka use the word *kataippōm* instead of *pēcikkoṇṭiruppōm* which means 'will be talking'. Likewise they use *caṭaṅku* (rituals) for *tirumaṇam* (marriage); *kaṇakka* (heavy or weightly) for *niṇṇaiya* (full); *vaṭivāi* (beautiful) for *nanṇāka* (better or well); and *kantōr* (office) for *aluvalakam* (office).

### Foreign Loan Words in Tamil

Words borrowed from English are phonetically changed and used as such in Sri Lanka. For example *paṇ* (bun) is written as *paṇ*; *kāppi* (coffee) as *kōppi*; *kōṇ* (court) as *kōṇ*; *ṣarī* (shirt) as *sēṭ*; *tārc* (torch) as *rōc*; and *ṭaval* (towel) as *tuvāi*. Likewise many Tamil words are phonetically changed and used as such in spoken and written Tamil of Sri Lanka.

English and Hindi words are used in spoken Tamil of the people who live in the northern districts of Tamil Nadu. Such loan words are not phonetically changed but written in the same way as they are pronounced in the concerned languages. For example such words as bus, cycle, car, office, late, post, bank, and coffee (*pas*, *caikkil*, *kār*, *āpīs*, *lēṭ*, *pōst*, *pānk* and *kāppi* respectively) are written in Tamil characters in the manner they are pronounced in English. Script writers, novelists and short story writers use these Tamilised forms in their writings. Some of them use such loan words frequently in their writings, while others use them only

when their Tamil equivalents are non-existent. Although in spoken Tamil such English words as leave, stamp, rail, station and telephone are commonly used, in written Tamil their equivalents *viṭumurai*, *tapāltalai*, *pukaivaṇṭi nilaiyam* and *tolaipēci* respectively are used. Some Urdu words like *calām* and *capācu* found place in the devotional poems of saints Aruṇakirinātar and Kumarakuru-parar, who lived in the seventeenth century. As a result of North Indian's contact some words from the Hindi language are used in the present-day spoken Tamil. For the same reason many sweets prepared in hotels of Tamil Nadu bear Hindi names.

From time immemorial a few Sanskrit words had been intermixed with Tamil. Prior to the second century A.D., and during the Caṅkam period only one per cent of Sanskrit words intermingled with Tamil. This increased to three to five per cent in the devotional songs of Ālvārs and Nāyaṇmārs who lived in the seventh and eighth centuries respectively. During the period of the epics also the intermixing of Sanskrit words with Tamil continued to increase. It reached its high water mark in the thirteenth century when the *maṇippravāḷa* style became popular. As a result the number of Sanskrit loan words increased phenomenally in the religious prose works of the Jains and the Vaiṣṇavites. But the commentators of grammatical and literary works wrote in chaste Tamil with the least number of Sanskrit loan words. As a result the *maṇippravāḷa* style fell into disuse. However in the Purāṇas, Talapurāṇas, Ulās and Kalambakams the percentage of Sanskrit loan words continued to remain at five to eight per cent. In the subsequent centuries the frequency increased with the advent of certain new types of versifications like *yamakam*, *cilētai* and *maṭakku*. They, however, became obsolete in course of time. Most of the devotional songs of Rāmaḷiṅka Cuvāmikaḷ contain very few Sanskrit loan words. Their percentage is very high in his prose work. Certain new usages peculiar to the Christians found their place in the *Bible*. A new translation of the *Bible* in chaste Tamil is now available. Certain Arabic words were frequently used by Muslim writers in their works. Even today stories written on Muslim families contain some words of Arabic origin. Stories about anglicized families or families living in metropolitan cities contain many words from English to reflect the spirit of their spoken Tamil as well as to give realism to the story. Though foreign loan words were used in Tamil in lesser or greater degree for various reasons



and at different periods of time, the Tamil language itself retained its individuality. It can be said that among the living languages of India, it is the Tamil language which has the least number of foreign loan words.

## Tamil Literature

The history of Tamil literature dates back to the pre-Christian era. As there was little impact of other linguistic groups or literatures on the Tamil country, the earliest Tamil poetical forms were derived from folk songs. Since literary works in other Dravidian languages came to be written only after the eighth century A.D., the Tamil literature prior to this, extending over a period of twelve centuries, had grown like the first child in a joint family. There is no clear reference to Kannada and Telugu languages in the *Caṅkam* classics (B.C. 500–200 A.D.). Likewise no reference exists regarding Malayalam, the language of Kerala, the region on the southwestern coast-line of peninsular India. The people who lived beyond the Tirupati Hills were referred to as *vaṭukar* in the *Caṅkam* classics. Likewise Kerala was mentioned as *Cēra nadu*. People of that region studied Tamil poetical works. And their poets too composed poems in Tamil. The contact with Sanskrit scholars was there between the *Caṅkam* period and the seventh century A.D. But it was restricted to Tamil scholars living in the urban areas. It was then that certain Sanskrit words like *teyvam* (God), *kāraṇam* (reason) and *āṇai* (command) gained a place in Tamil vocabulary. Likewise many words from North Indian languages found a place in Tamil with the spread of Jainism and Buddhism in the Tamil country. The Buddhists and Jains, who were well versed in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali, were largely responsible for this admixture. The impact of Sanskrit literature on Tamil gradually increased. Only

then was there an influx of Sanskrit words into Tamil. During this period only two languages, Tamil and Sanskrit, were regarded as literary languages. The former was known as the language of the South and the latter as the language of the North. Sanskrit scholars termed Tamil as Dravidian. Since it was called Dravidian, it was not mentioned as such in Tamil literary works of the time. Saint Tirunāvukkarcar, who lived in the seventh century A.D., while praising the omnipotence of Lord Siva, mentions that He was the personification of Aryan and Tamil, thereby classifying the cultural composition of ancient India into two main groups. The same idea found expression in the *purāṇas* as well, where it is indicated from one side of the *tamarukam* (a small leather musical instrument held by Siva) originated Sanskrit and from the other, Tamil. It was also the origin of the story that Siva taught Sanskrit to Pāṇini, and Tamil to Agastya. All these indicate that in the earlier period of Indian literary history only Tamil and Sanskrit existed.

#### *Contact with Sanskritists*

After the eighth century A.D. Jain scholars translated some Sanskrit works into Tamil while certain other works were based on Sanskrit. Up to the third century A.D. only the Cēras, the Cōlas and the Pāṇdyas ruled the Tamil country. A turmoil followed their rule, and the Pallavas of Kanchipuram emerged as the political power. Some of the Pallava rulers were learned in Sanskrit. The Pallava king, Mahendravarman wrote his magnum opus, *Mat-tavilāsa*, a play (farce) in Sanskrit. The Pallava rulers in general patronized both Sanskrit and Tamil languages and literatures as well as fine arts. Their capital, Kanchipuram, became the centre of Sanskrit studies. Famous poets like Daṇḍin, the author of *Kāvyādarśa*, and others lived there and rendered great service to Sanskrit language and literature. As a result of the emergence of Sanskrit as an important language, three different types of scholars appeared on the literary scene: scholars proficient both in Tamil and Sanskrit and others skilful in any one of the two languages. The number of Sanskrit scholars increased when Saṅkara's Advaita and Rāmāuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophies became popular in the country. During this period many Sanskrit Purāṇas were also translated into Tamil. It was then that some scholars realised that both Tamil and Sanskrit scholars function as two distinct groups within a single cultural milieu. They attempted to bring them together by

innovating a new style of hybrid writing called *maṇippravāḷa*, where equal amount of Sanskrit and Tamil words were used like pearl and coral. Some Vaiṣṇavite scholars (who wrote commentaries on the devotional songs of Ālvārs) and certain Jain scholars tried to popularise the hybrid style by writing in *maṇippravāḷa*. They sincerely believed that this style would promote unity and create a climate of understanding between Tamil and Sanskrit scholars. With this aim in view certain Sanskrit works were written in Grantha script and Tamil works in *maṇippravāḷa* style. Undoubtedly their aim was a noble one. However, they failed to comprehend that a few scholars would not be able to change the very tenor of a language. Despite their noble aim, therefore, the *maṇippravāḷa* style failed to make any headway among the scholars. Eminent poets like Kampan and famous commentators who wrote commentaries on Tamil literary and grammatical texts, rejected this style. Instead they preferred a style consistent with the traditional features of the Tamil language. Some names of characters in Kampan's Rāmāyaṇa were phonetically modified, and written as such, to sound like Tamil names. In some other cases he translated certain Sanskrit proper names into suitable Tamil equivalents in order to conform to Tamil literary traditions. As a result proper names like Lakṣmaṇa, Vibīṣṇa, Sūbarna, Svarṇavarṇa and Ahalya became Ilakkuvaṇ, Viṭaṇaṇ, Uvaṇaṇ, Cuvāṇavaṇṇaṇ and Akalikai or Ālikai respectively. Some other names like Suvarṇavarṇa and Yagñavirōda were literally translated to read as Kaṇakamēṇi and Vēlvippakaiṇaṇ respectively. During this period certain scholars tried to increase the Sanskrit vocabulary in Tamil while others preferred to use a limited number of Sanskrit loan words with due phonetic modifications. Ultimately the efforts to preserve Tamil words and Tamil sounds triumphed.

### *Contact with Others*

The Pallava dynasty collapsed towards the end of the ninth century A.D. The Cōlas reemerged and rose as sovereign power and ruled the Tamil country up to the thirteenth century, when they also disintegrated. Mohammedan invasions rocked the country. Under the Vijayanagar regime Nāyak kings gained favour and standing in Tamil Nadu. Owing to the political prominence of the Telugus, their cooperation with Tamils increased in various spheres of activity. Some of the devotional poems of Ālvārs were translated

into Telugu. During the same period *Pirapulinkalilai* and other works were translated into Tamil. Likewise the Tamil hagiologies of the Saiva saints were translated into Kannada. As a result of such literary activities a closer understanding was established among the Dravidian languages of the South. Some Marathi words formed part of the colloquial Tamil, while the Saraboji rulers of Mahārāshtrā ruled part of the Tamil country with their seat at Thanjavur. During the period of the Nawabs of Carnatic some Persian and Arabic words became part of the administrative vocabulary of the Tamil language. Some of them were frequently used in the spoken language as well. Besides these, the Tamil language borrowed many words from the European languages since the beginning of the seventeenth century. This process of borrowing from the European languages increased when the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English and the French established their commercial and political interests in the country. With the introduction of printing machines, prose works became numerous. When the English established their political hegemony over the Indian sub-continent, western literary genres like the short story and the novel reached Tamil through the medium of English. Consequently new literary forms like short story, novel and plays were experimented. Since the Tamil speaking area of the Indian sub-continent had been under the political dominance of foreigners up to 1947, the impact of various dynasty of rulers is adequately reflected in the continuous growth of the Tamil language.

### *Poetic Forms*

In the early stages of the development of Tamil literature three types of poetical compositions, *akaval*, *kalippa* and *paripāṭal* were popular. The *akaval* type of verse is formed from a minimum of three lines to a maximum of several hundreds of lines. Each line consists of four-feet or four *cīrs*. A combination of two or more metrical units or syllables or *acais* comprises a foot or *cīr*. The basic metrical unit or *acai* is formed by one or two vowels. The *akaval* poetry resembles prose because of its narrative quality. The main difference between *akaval* and prose is that the former is written in four-foot lines with alliteration and assonance while the latter is invariably without these essential features. However in the earlier days even prose was written in four-foot lines. This can be seen in the prose passages of *Cilappatikāram* and in the



writings of scholiasts. The *kali* verse like *akaval* is written in four-foot lines with a difference in rhyme. The foot is arranged in such a way as to produce a tripping rhyme. *Paripāṭal* has a smooth flowing rhyme. Both *kali* and *paripāṭal* verse forms must have been modelled on folk songs. They are not prosaic either in form or metre, for a variety of poetic components are used to make the verse forms skip. Consequently, *Tolkāppiyam* mentions that these poetical forms are eminently suitable for composing love poems. The *Tolkāppiyam* discusses various types of verse forms. It mentions about *veṇpa*, which became popular only after the second century A.D. After this period, *kali* and *paripāṭal* lost their importance. Besides these *Tolkāppiyam* refers to another poetical form known as *paṇṇatti*. Perhaps this type of verse form has been from folk music. It is but natural for certain musical forms, to enter literature. Today too there are some such music generated forms.

Even after grammatical and poetical conventions were well established, Tamil poets continued to favour traditional poetic forms. They remained aloof without trying out in their works, the new folk forms that flourished in those days. But Iḷaṅkō, the author of *Cilappatikāram*, adopted several of these new folk forms in his work. Likewise the seventh and the eighth century Saiva and Vaiṣṇava hymnodists made the best use of the then available folk music. A new poetical form, *viruttam*, emerged in fact from folk songs. This new poetical form was first put to major use in the tenth century by the Jain poet Tiruttakkatēvar in his epic *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. All the three thousand verses are in *viruttam*. Prior to the ninth century all the major epics in Tamil had been written in *akaval*. When Tiruttakkatēvar successfully experimented with the *viruttam* form of versification in his epic, other poets like Cēkkiḷār and Kampar composed their poetical works in *viruttam*. Till today *viruttam* is the largely used form in Tamil poetry. Though the term *viruttam* is a derivation from Sanskrit, there is little connection with Sanskrit prosody. It is in fact a beautiful form of poetry evolved from Tamil folk music. In contrast to *akaval*, *viruttam* has no restriction regarding the occurrence of four *cīrs* in a line. A line may consist of four, five, or even forty *cīrs*. However, a *viruttam* poem should conform to certain rules. It should have four lines. All lines should have exactly the same number of *cīrs* as in the first line. There is no restriction regarding the length of *cīrs*: they may either be long or short depending on the poets' need. Countless

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variations are possible as a result of this flexible rule. Depending on emotions words are arranged to effect different rhythm patterns. As a result *viruttam* has become the most suitable form of poetry to give effect to various types of emotions.

In the seventeenth century even such an important medium as *viruttam* was found inadequate. The poets, therefore, looked for new forms from the then popular folk poetry. As a result certain folk forms like *cintu*, *kaṇṇi* and *kummi* gained literary stature. Up to this century, efforts to discover new forms continued. Pārtiyār utilised the poetic form found in folk songs sung by street beggars or *kōṇaṅkis*. Similarly Pāratitācaṇ made use of the rope-dancer's songs to compose one of his very interesting poems. The metrical form found in the *kīrttaṇai* has also been adopted in modern Tamil poetry. In addition to these, efforts and experiments are continuing today to evolve new poetical forms.

### *Different Prose Styles*

In the growth of Tamil prose style too one can discover the periodical changes that had taken place in Tamil language. Early prose was written like the *akaval* with alliteration and assonance. Later these were reduced, but the syntactical form with subject and predicate was maintained. Even this prose style was not based on the syntax of spoken Tamil. If analysed critically, the early poetical style was closer to spoken Tamil, than to the written one. The written prose possessed brevity. It reflected even the complexity and subtlety of thought. Since the early prose was meant for scholars, it contained many rare words unknown to spoken language. It was only with the advent of the printing machine, that it was realised that prose could be used by all as a potential medium. As a result prose was simplified, rare words were reduced to the minimum and the syntax became closer to the spoken language. When weeklies and dailies became popular in the last century, Tamil prose attained lucidity and simplicity. Its syntax became similar to the spoken tongue where to novel and short story emerged as popular genres read and appreciated by all, simplicity and lucidity became part of the literary style. As a consequence, a new prose style capable of giving form to different kinds of emotions and thought contents with only simple and known words was evolved.

In the case of poetry, when new forms of versification were introduced, the old forms were not totally rejected. Even today

there are poets who use only traditional forms of versification. Likewise, despite the growth of simple prose, writers are not wanting even now who write in a bombastic style rich in alliterations, assonances and archaic words. Therefore, what is said in the foregoing pages as a growth of new prose style is in fact the changes one finds in the works of many modern writers.

### *Contents of this Book*

The present History of Tamil literature, which traces the periodical changes and subsequent growth of Tamil language and literature, does not attempt to discuss all the works in Tamil. Innumerable books were written during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The books that were written in the past six decades of the twentieth century outnumbered the total number of books publishing during the past twenty-four centuries. Therefore, for obvious reasons, neither all the published books nor all the writers are mentioned in this work. However only the books and authors that are essential to point out the major trends in Tamil language and literature are mentioned in this book.

Since this book is meant for other linguistic groups in the country and written with a limit set to the number of pages, there is no scope for detailed explanation or highlighting special features of books and elaborate notes on authors. A word about modern literature: the works that are mentioned here cannot be said with certainty that they will survive the test of time and remain in the future as literary pieces. Some of the works that are not referred to in this work may in the future live as literary pieces. The tide of time is more powerful than the preferences of my own intellect.

The history of Tamil literature is classified into different ways. The following classification is attempted with the main purpose of enabling other linguistic groups to understand Tamil literature.

### *Ancient Period*

1. *The Period of Caṅkam Literature*: B.C. 500–200 A.D. The age of *akam* and *puṇam* poetical works.
2. *The Period of Ethical Literature*: 100–500 A.D. (a) *Tirukkural* and other ethical works; (b) *Kārnārpattu* and other works written in *venpa* metre.
3. *The Period of Old Epics*: *Cilappatikāram*, *Maṇimekalai*, *Muttollāyiram* and other works.

### Medieval Period

1. *The Period of Bhakti Literature*: 600–900 A.D. (a) The hymns of Nāyanmārs and Ālvārs; (b) *Nantikkalam-pakam* and other literary works.
2. *The Period of Epic Literature*: 900–1200 A.D. (a) Jain and Buddhist works like *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, *Peruṅkatai* and other literary works; (b) Grammatical works like *Iraiyaṇār Kaḷaviyal* and others; (c) Eminent poets like Cēkkiḷār, Kampar, Oṭṭakkūttar, Auvaiyār and others; (d) Minor literary works like *ulā*, *paraṇi* and *piḷḷaittamiḷ*.
3. *The Period of Commentaries*: 1200–1500 A.D. (a) Commentators like *Iḷampūraṇar*, *Pērāciriyaṇar* and others; (b) (i) Commentaries on Vaiṣṇava devotional works; (ii) Islamic literature; (iii) Christian Tamil scholars: Vīramāmuṇivar and others; (iv) the growth of prose literature.

### Modern Literature

1. *Nineteenth Century*: (a) Christian contribution to Tamil literature; (b) Rāmaliṅkar, Vētanāyakar and others; (c) The growth of novels and essays.
2. *Twentieth Century*: (a) Pāratiyār, Kalki, Putumaippittan; (b) Short story, novel and plays; (c) Biography, essays and critical works.

## Caṅkam Literature

(B.C. 500–200 A.D.)

### *Classical Literature*

Madurai is one of the oldest metropolitan cities in the world. Despite change of dynasties, it has been one of the famous cities over several centuries. One of the poets of the ancient period paid a glowing tribute to this city thus: "The fort at Madurai city witnessed only the siege of flooding waters but not of the enemies." <sup>1</sup> Though it is an imaginative poetic expression, it means that the city of Madurai, in the midst of countless changes has been having a peaceful existence. What is said about Madurai is equally true of the ancient cultural life of Tamil Nadu. If this fact is understood, then one could have a clear perspective of centuries of continued growth of the Tamil language.

A section of ancient Tamil literature has been preserved even today. It is known as the *Caṅkam* literature. Tolkāppiyar, a renowned scholar, analysed it and wrote the famous grammatical work entitled *Tolkāppiyam*. Only the *Tolkāppiyam* and the *Caṅkam* classics are useful to know about the ancient Tamil language and literature.

Scholars consider that the poems in the *Caṅkam* anthologies cover a period from B.C. 500–200 A.D. *Tolkāppiyam* also belonged to this period. In any country, poets give a written form to oral literature after several centuries of its existence. Only after this, the creative works of poets assume a separate growth. Likewise



in Tamil Nadu folk songs should have been recited and enjoyed by people, before the poems in the *Caṅkam* classics could appear. The conventions of folk songs are reflected in the written compositions of poets. Scholars who studied these poems, later formulated their theories of prosody. Tolkāppiyar wrote the grammar *Tolkāppiyam* only after the advent of many literary and grammatical works. Paṇampāraṇār in his preface to *Tolkāppiyam* mentions that the Tamil language was spoken from Tirupati in the North to Kanyakumari in the South and that Tolkāppiyar analysed both the oral and written literary traditions as well as the grammatical works prior to his period. Tolkāppiyar himself cites the rules and theories of other grammarians in his work. It is clear from these deliberations that two thousand years ago, there were literary and grammatical works in Tamil.

### Anthology

Poets from different parts of the country composed poems and left them to posterity in their houses and palaces of their patron-kings. Preservation became impossible, because they were scattered all over the country and they were written mostly on perishable material like palm leaves. In the second century A.D. efforts were made by poets and patron-philanthropists to preserve them from decay and human neglect. The result was the collection of two sets of collections of poems, the *Eight Anthologies* (*Eṭṭuttokai*) and the *Ten Songs* (*Pattuppāṭṭu*); the former is a compilation of short poems into eight independent works and the latter is a collection of ten long poems, most of them running into several hundred lines. Altogether these nine works form what is now known as the *Caṅkam* literature.

### Origin of the Term Caṅkam

Why have the ancient literary works come to be known as *Caṅkam* literature? The term *Caṅkam* means an academy of letters, or a council organised by scholars or monks. In the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. the Jain monks inaugurated councils to do educational and religious services to the community. Scholars consider that literary academies similar to the Jain councils must have existed where the poets would have composed their poems. It is also known that in the Tamil country there existed three academies.

When the first two at Madurai and Kapatapuram ceased to exist, the third one was inaugurated at Madurai, with the patronage of Pāṇḍya kings. Since it is regarded that the *Eight Anthologies* and the *Ten Songs* belong to the third *Caṅkam*, they are known as the *Caṅkam* classics or literature. Literary evidences support the existence of *Caṅkams* at Madurai, where the bards gathered periodically to evaluate their works and the patronage received by them from the kings of the Pāṇḍya country. The same sources also confirm that besides the Pāṇḍyas, the Cōlas, the Cēras, their chieftains and nobles supported the poets. Besides writing poems of a general nature, they composed panegyric poems on patron-kings and nobles as well as on their lands and towns. Nevertheless there is little evidence to support the views of certain scholars that those literary academies existed under the leadership of such and such scholars for such and such specific period of time. Whether or not the academies ever existed, it is impossible to deny that scholars often met and discussed works of literary merit and that the books which received the imprimatur of this learned body were alone later codified into anthologies, known as the *Caṅkam* literature.

### *Old Conventions or Traditions*

There exists many old conventions in the *Caṅkam* classics. The classification of human emotions into two broad categories, namely, *akam* (internal) and *puram* (external) is perhaps the most important of such traditions. The various phases of love between two imaginative characters, the hero and the heroine, is portrayed in the *akam* poems, while the *puram* poems depict heroism, generosity and greatness of kings and famous citizens. Therefore it can be said that imaginative poems are *akam* and realistic ones are *puram*.

During the *Caṅkam* period people lived mostly in hamlets. Few lived in cities. There was little communication or commingling among them. These hamlets were scattered all over the montane, pastoral, agricultural and littoral regions. People lived and practised their respective avocations peculiar to the region like hunting, shepherding, farming and fishing. A young man and a nubile girl of matching beauty, intelligence and affability met, fell in love, married and entered family life. It was the common way of life in those hamlets. Many of the folk stories, songs, and dramas centred round this theme of human love. Especially the folk songs por-

trayed not merely the natural beauty of each region but the people's day-to-day life lived close to nature. The natural objects or things peculiar to each regional landscape and the life-style formed the background of the poems. They were also reflected in their love affairs. It came to be called *uripporuḷ*. The objects of flora, fauna and avifauna which form the setting for the life of love are collectively known as *karupporuḷ*. The regional landscape and their seasons came to be known as *mutarpporuḷ*. As every region has its own scenic variations and differences in life-style, the folk songs of one region varied from the other. These folk songs were transformed into five-fold regional poetry, namely the montane, the arid, the pastoral, the agricultural and littoral regional poetry, during the period when *Caṅkam* poems were written. There is no scope for obtaining those old folk songs now. Even the regional poems written similar to the folk songs are not available in full now. Among the codified anthologies, roughly 1800 *akam* poems are now available. *Tolkāppiyam*, the extant work, interprets the literary convention of this period. The literary canon given in this work was followed by poets for many centuries in their love songs. That literary tradition is given in detail in a chart attached to this chapter.

From time immemorial it was a tradition that while writing an imaginative love poem, the landscape together with its seasons, birds, animals, trees and flowers should form its background. Since the poetic conventions strongly governed the folk songs of the day, the same rules were utilised by poets in their written compositions. Therefore, when the poet depicts the family life along with *ūṭal* or sulkiness between husband and wife, the landscape should be the agricultural region. The convention does not permit the poet to relate that phase of family life either to montane or pastoral region. Since these traditions were deep rooted even in the folk-lore the later poets had to conform to them. As a result description of nature plays an important role in the *Caṅkam* poetry. Some poems give the impression that they are meant to describe the beauty of nature. However, this is not true, for the primary aim of those poems is to describe the noumenon or the "inner inspiration of love". Description of nature is only a background for an interpretation of that human love. Despite the copious description of nature in the *Caṅkam* literature, it is surprising to note that there are no poems which describe only the material beauty of nature. There is not even a single poem in the *Caṅkam* anthology which describes

the objects of nature, as the modern poets do about the sun, the moon, the cloud and creepers.

There is one poem in *Kuruntokai* which, however, describes a flock of birds which return to their nests soon after sunset. The gist of the poem is as follows:

It is pitiable to see the birds flying fast after the sunset. They hurry because they carry the feed to their young ones which are in the nest atop the tall *marāmarā* trees.<sup>2</sup>

To a casual reader, the poem appears to be a description of the evening sky or flock of birds which fly in the sky. Since there is no convention in the *Caṅkam* literature to sing of the aesthetic beauty of nature, an ancient scholar who read and enjoyed the poem wrote a footnote in the following manner. "A lady who languished for her lover's company spoke these words of anguish on the approach of the evening." Only when we read the footnote along with the poem we realise that it is an imaginative love poem of the *akam* category. Without the footnote, there is every possibility to misconstrue that it is a word-picture of a poet engrossed in the beauty of nature.

In folk songs, neither the names of the important characters or their family will ever appear. This important convention generally followed in folk songs is strictly adhered to in *akam* poetry. Whereas in *puṛam* type of poetry, it was praiseworthy to mention the name of the chief of king while extolling his valour. In the case of love poems the emotional aspect of love should be touched upon in general terms. Only then the poetry could be appreciated by all. Therefore, it is a convention in folk songs, which deal with *akam* theme, that the main male and female characters are respectively termed *talaivan* and *talaivi* or *kātalan* and *kātali*. The same convention is followed in the *Caṅkam* literature. There is very little scope for the play of imagination in *puṛam* poetry. They mention both the name and the family of the main character as well as specifically name the king's prowess or the philanthropist's generosity. Therefore the *puṛam* poetry extols the events in a king's or chieftain's life and hence are valuable as materials for historical studies. Though they exhibit considerable skill in narrating an incident, they do not give scope for creating an incident which had not taken place in a person's life.

There is a convention in *puṛam* poetry to classify the various types of warfare into seven categories, known as *tiṇai* in Tamil. The initial stage of warfare is known as *veṭcittiṇai* when forays and frontier raids are made for the purpose of cattle lifting. The actual invasion into an enemy's territory is termed as *vañci*. The siege of the enemy's fort is known as *uḷiñci*, pitched battle is *tumpai*, and the resultant victory is *vākai*. To praise the victorious king is called *pātāṇ thiṇai*. And to sing of the transitory nature of life is called *kāñcittiṇai*.

Poems based on *akam* theme are also classified into seven categories, namely, *kuriñci*, *mullai*, *marutam*, *neytal*, *pālai*, *kaikkiḷai* and *peruntiṇai*. The first five categories treat the normal type of feelings of love and as such they are considered to be of higher value in social estimate. The last two, *kaikkiḷai* and *peruntiṇai*, deal with abnormal aspects of love, and therefore, they have lesser value in social estimate. *Kaikkiḷai* dwells upon one-sided love and *peruntiṇai* treats of unequal love. The poems in *Caṅkam* literature deal with seven aspects of *akam* and seven aspects of *puṛam* themes.

#### *Eṭṭuttokai* (Eight Anthologies)

Only five among the eight anthologies, contain poems concerning *akam* theme. Of these five, *Akanāṇūru* consists of four hundred poems of thirteen to thirty-one lines; the *Narriṇai* comprises four hundred poems of nine to twelve lines. Four hundred poems of four to eight lines are included in *Kuṛuntokai*. Five hundred short poems of three to five lines comprise *Aiṅkuṛunūru*. *Kalittokai* contains one hundred and fifty poems composed in rhythmic *kali* metre.

The *Paripāṭal* is so called because of a special mellifluous metre employed in its composition, meant to be sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments. The anthology of *Peripāṭal* is supposed to have seventy poems but only twenty-two are now available. Some among them are love poems; others are devotional odes.

The anthology *Patirruppattu* (ten times ten poems) consists of one hundred panegyric poems: ten poems each in praise of ten kings of the Cēra dynasty. The *Puṛaṇāṇūru*, another anthology pertaining to *puṛam* theme, contains four hundred poems, elegiac, panegyric and heroic in nature, attributed to kings, chieftains and



philanthropists of the Tamil country. There are poems in this anthology which speak about the highest philosophy and the noblest of truths.

### *Love Poems*

In *akam* poems, there is very little description of the physical beauty of woman. There are not many references to carnal pleasures of life. Many of the love poems highlight only the most "internal, personal and directly incommunicable human experience and that is love and all its emotional phases."

A love-lorn lady, awaiting the arrival of her lover for a long time, loses all hopes of living when there is no sign of his return. She doubts whether she would die without ever seeing the return of her lover. What she says in that desperate mood is beautifully portrayed in one of the poems in *Narriṇai*. She says "Tōḷi (the heroine's close companion), I do not fear death, but I fear one thing, (that is forgetfulness). If I were to die and be born again will I ever forget my lover? This is my fear."

Death, I fear not  
If I were to die  
And be born again  
In that rebirth  
Will I ever forget my lover?  
That's my fear.

Another lady stricken with love, defines the terms 'love' and 'separation' in a poem. To her love is comparable to the relationship that exists between the body and the soul. That life is but a union of soul with body. Death occurs when the soul departs from the body. Separation from lover is comparable to death.

That body  
Pulsates with life  
Only with the soul's union.  
To me that life is love  
If soul departs from body  
There results death.  
Death to me is separation  
(From my beloved.)  
These are unknown to her.<sup>4</sup>

The concept of love as portrayed in the *Caṅkam* poem is elaborated by Pāratiyār, one of the greatest Tamil poets of this century, in his famous poem 'Kuyil Pāṭṭu'. He says,

Love! Love! Love!  
If love is lost  
Death! Death! Death!

There are poems in *Caṅkam* literature which focuses one's attention on the unselfishness of lovers, for example in *Akanāṇūru*, the heroine of the poem expresses her wish thus: "I am full of distress because of the long separation of my lover. However, my only anxiety is that he should successfully complete the mission for which he has gone to a foreign land."<sup>6</sup> In another poem, when a maid (Tōḷi) asks Talaivi (the heroine of the poem) the reasons for her grief, her reply reflects her sophistication of feeling. Although she knows that separation from her sweetheart is not that important reason for her affliction, she says, "If only I could hear that he would return safely from the foreign land, there is no reason for my eyes to be bedewed with tears."<sup>7</sup> She is not worried over her grief but wants her lover to be free from sufferings.

It was the belief of the people of the *Caṅkam* period that the chirps of a lizard portended certain impending events or news. They also adduced good and bad omens if the sound came from certain direction and in a certain manner. In one of the *Caṅkam* poems, the heroine who is lying on her bed stricken with her lover's separation hears the notes of the lizard. On hearing the sound she is startled and turns to the direction from which the sound emanates and prays thus: "Please give me good news of my beloved. How I wish that it indicates his well-being."

While lying listlessly on the bed  
Whenever she heard the lizard's chirp  
Seized with anxiety she prayed  
Bring good tidings of my beloved;  
And braved the eventide.<sup>8</sup>

The intensity of love that exists between lovers on the day of the marriage seldom continues to be the same in their later life. But there are instances contrary of this general rule. And this is portrayed in one of the *Caṅkam* poems. The lady in the following poem

confides to her companion, the happiness of her married life. "Oh my companion, when you introduced my lover to me you spoke of his sterling qualities and gave confidence. What you spoke then are true. Even today he continues to be sweet to me. He is sweeter than the tunes played by an expert on *yāl*. He is more beloved to me now than that day we got married." Her happy married life has flowered into a beautiful poem in the *Caṅkam* literature thus:

More endearing to me he is  
Than the day of wedding  
Than the best of tunes  
And the finest of compositions  
Composed by a master composer."

There is another poem in *Caṅkam* literature which portrays a mother's wonder at her daughter's change of attitude, especially her mental maturity soon after her marriage. The mother relates her daughter's mental transformation thus: "When my daughter was young, I used to carry a cup of milk mixed with honey in one hand and a cane in the other to force her to drink the milk. However she would run away without drinking it. Whereupon her foster-mothers used to run after her. My daughter would invariably escape from them, stubbornly refusing to drink the milk. It was with such a loving care she grew up in our home. But now she lives in penury because her husband's family is hard up. Despite this, she cares neither for the wealth nor the delicious food available in her father's house, and lives her life with fortitude eating frugally and at times skipping meals for want of food. How does she get this fortitude now?"<sup>10</sup> Such vivid descriptions as this one, extolling the mental maturity and selflessness of lovers, are many in *Caṅkam* literature. Since *Caṅkam* poems depicted these noble emotions, the poets of subsequent generations also followed these poetic conventions faithfully.

### *Kalittokai*

The love poems of *Kalittokai* are known for their rhythm and word pictures. *Tāḷicai*, one of the component parts in *Kalittokai* poems, is based on the folk music of yore. It captivates the mind by its flawless rhythm and by the idea of the sentiment expressed thrice in a particular metre. The following three *tāḷicai* poems

express a similar universal truth thrice, which is borne out from the consoling words spoken by an elderly person to a mother, whose daughter had eloped with her lover. The content of his words are as follows:

Although sandalwood trees are grown in montane regions, the wood is not useful to the mountain itself but to those who smear the paste on their body. Likewise is your daughter. It is natural for her to leave you and go with her lover.

Although pearls are found in the deep sea, they are not useful to the sea but only to those who wear them. This is true in the case of your daughter also.

Although the music that comes out of the *yāl* is not useful to the instrument itself, but to those who hear and appreciate it. This is equally true in your daughter's case also.<sup>11</sup>

The poems in *Paripāṭal* are known for their pleasing rhythm. In those days they were sung to the accompaniment of a *yāl*. Under each poem references are made to the composer of the tune as well as its name. Some of the poems in this work praise the gods, while others give word-pictures about various aspects of human love. It is a tradition that poems on such themes were written and sung to the accompaniment of music. After the *Caṅkam* period, the form found in *Paripāṭal* poems lost their importance. It is equally true in the case of poems in *Kalittokai*. Both these poetical forms lost their importance with the growth of *viruttam*, a new metre in which Tamil poems came to be written after the *Caṅkam* period.

### *Description of Nature*

The human qualities like love, valour and munificence became the subject matter, and the scenic splendour of nature provided the background for the *Caṅkam* poems. Every object in nature, the sky, mountains, trees, creepers, wandering animals, birds that build their nests in the paddy fields, aquatic flowers that grow in tanks, littoral groves, backwaters and the very waves of sea and seasonal winds captured the hearts of poets. What they enjoyed in nature was depicted in their poems for others to read and enjoy. The main aim of their poems is to highlight such qualities as love, valour and generosity while the description of nature forms the

background for the human drama. The description such as they are leave an unforgettable imprint on the mind. They grip the minds of generations of people. This is borne out by certain references that have come down to us. We have mentioned earlier the efforts of scholars to bring out a collection of *Caṅkam* poems. While collecting the poems, they found that certain poems were found without the names of authors or any other reference to their life. They solved the problem of finding the author's name by adopting a gripping description of an aspect of nature, as the author's name. Many gripping phrases like, *cempulappeyalnīr*, *aṇil-āṭumunril*, *kayam*, *kalporucirunurai*, *kuppaikkōli* are found in the *Caṅkam* classics, as the names of authors of the poems. The poet who described the rain water which had fallen on red-earth came to be called as *Cempulappeyalnīrār*. Another poet, who described the squirrel which was playing at the porch or veranda of a house in a deserted village, is known as *Aṇilāṭumunrilār*. Yet another poet is known as *Kayamaṇār*, for describing in two poems the beauty of a pond. Another poet earns his name by the simile he used for describing the transitory nature of a love-lorn lady's anguish. Her sorrow will cease to exist like the foam dashed against the rock. The simile *kalporucirunurai* is so impressive that it becomes the pseudonym of the poet. Another poet who described the cock-fight on a refuse dump and used it as a simile is known as *Kuppaikkōliyar*. The poets who described the crow, owl, and the moon are known respectively as *Kākkaippāṇiyār*, *Aṇcilāntaiyar*, and *Neṭuveṇṇilaviṇār*. Another poet who described a scene in which two elephants dragged a worn away rope, came to be known as *Tēypurippalaṅkayirriṇār*.

Every poem in *Patirruppattu* has a title, which is nothing but an impressive description of an event in the poem. Ten lengthy poems are found in the *Pattupāṭṭu* anthology. A poem in 103 lines is known as *Mullaippāṭṭu*. It describes the grief of the heroine in separation as well as the happiness of the hero as he returns home. Another poem which describes the montane region in 261 lines is known as *Kuriṅcippāṭṭu*. The Tamil word *kuriṅci* denotes not merely the mountain region but also the several mental states and types of conversation among those involved in love affairs. *Neṭunalvātai* (Long Dreary Wind) in 188 lines also derived its name because of the description given to the dreary cold winter wind, which is known as *vātai* in Tamil. In the same anthology, another



poem *Malaipaṭukaṭām* in 583 lines, gives a long list of sounds that emanate from the mountainous region. In the poet's imagination the conglomeration of sounds echoing in the mountain are similar to wild elephant's thunder. Therefore, the lengthy poem is known as *Malaipaṭukaṭām* which literally means exudation of a mountain. Natural objects are given as titles in *Aiṅkurunūru*, a collection of five hundred poems, in *Eṭṭuttokai* or Eight Anthologies.

Many of the *Caṅkam* poets grew up in small hamlets near mountainous, pastoral and riverain regions. The names of places prefixed before their names support this view. The names of places that occur in the poems also lend support. Since they lived close to nature, they perceived its beauty and therefore gave a minute picture of it in their poems. Even those poets who lived in metropolitan cities like Madurai and Vanci made frequent visits to hamlets close to montane and pastoral regions and enjoyed the beauty of nature. Only with that experience they were able to compose poems depicting the beauty of nature. Even when it became necessary to praise nobles they preferred invariably to sing the natural beauty of their territory rather than other things. This attitude, though mainly due to their association with nature, is in a great measure due to their pride. Even in chill penury, poets like Peruñcittiraṇār failed to abase themselves before their patrons. This being the quality of ancient Tamil poets, there exists not even a single poem in the entire *Caṅkam* literature, where a poet begged favours of a patron. To cite an example when the poet Mōcikīraṇār approached a patron, who was the leader of Koṅkāṇam, for help, the poet said, "I cannot entreat you for riches; but I can sing the beauty of your mountain with pleasure and comparative ease."<sup>12</sup> There are no instances in *Caṅkam* poetry where nature is personified as God. Nor is there any instance to see the attributes of God in natural objects, except in *Paripāṭal*. But all the poets of this period showed matchless ardour in describing the beauty of nature. Whatever may be the theme of their poems, human love, heroism or generosity, description of nature found an important place. Apostrophes addressed to objects in nature such as *nocci* (*Vitex nīrgundi*) tree, millet, *vayalai*, jasmine creepers, parrot, swan, stork, crab, bee, moon, sun, sea and rain, are to be found in the *Caṅkam* literature.

Till the time translations and adaptations from Sanskrit came into Tamil, the *akam* (interior) and the *puṛam* (exterior) conven-

tions, were quite strong. In fact the *akam* conventions were more deep-rooted than the *puram* ones.

Be thoughtful of your sweetheart  
Oh he the Lord of montane region  
Where fenced jack trees bear fruits on trunks  
Who would know  
That so delicate is she  
As the tender branch  
That holds a large jackfruit.<sup>13</sup>

The above mentioned *akam* poem is in the *Kuruntokai* anthology. Though the hero and the heroine mentioned in the poem are lovers for some time, they are not legally married. In this situation the maid offers some wise counsel to the hero so that he will take measures to marry his lady-love. The content of the poem is as follows:

The jack-trees which grow in your mountain region bear fruits in their roots. They are also fenced with bamboos. Since you come from such a region you must behave with consideration to your lady love. Her life is as delicate as the tender branch which holds a large jack-fruit whereas her love for you is immense.

The natural objects belonging to the mountain region such as the jack-tree and bamboo are described in the poem. The simile of a large jack-fruit hanging from a tender branch indicates the pining of the lady during the pre-nuptial love period. It also indicates that the pre-nuptial period is a trying one for the heroine. On the other hand, through the description of the jack-tree which bears fruit in its trunk, the maid gives some sound advice to the hero. However large the fruit may be, if it hangs from the root of the tree it is not a burden to the tree, unlike the fruit that hangs from a tender branch. Likewise the family life, commenced after a formal wedding in the presence of the family members, has very little anxiety, which the heroine experiences during the pre-nuptial love period. With the aid of a description of an object in nature the maid advises the hero to get married soon. More than one thousand eight hundred *akam* poems in the *Caṅkam* anthology have similar themes. All these poems are addressed either by the heroine or her maid, the hero or his friend, the mother or the

foster-mother in the form of a dramatic monologue.

In the poems the characters speak, but not the poets. The description of material nature in *akam* poems convey certain implicit meanings too. Such descriptions of nature may be elaborate, running into several lines or concise in one or two lines depending on the theme. In some poems there may not be any description of nature at all.

As indiscreet as the cloud  
That bursts forth  
On tanks, paddy fields and waste lands  
Pekan the munificent is  
While offering bounties  
On the battle front  
Indiscreet he is not  
While facing the enemy's might<sup>14</sup>

The above-mentioned *puṇam* poem by Parānar was composed in honour of Pēkaṇ, a philanthropist of the *Caṅkam* age. He was renowned as a patron of poets, and known for his generosity and heroism. He gave away wealth without discrimination to anybody who came for it. His bountiful generosity is compared to the rain which rains indiscriminately for fresh water tanks, paddy fields and waste lands. Though he showed no discrimination, while offering presents, he was prudent while fighting with his enemies on the battlefield. In praising Pēkaṇ's eminent qualities such as benevolence and bravery the poet emphasises that while offering bounties he was indiscriminate but while fighting he was discreet.

Most of the poems in *Puṇanāṇūru* and *Paṭirruppatu* happen to be such apostrophes of the poet. A few others are dramatic monologues where an apostrophe is made by a *pāṇar* (minstrel) or a *viṇaliyar* (female dancers or singers). Some other poems highlight only the general truths of life.

### *Different Kinds of Poets*

There are 2381 poems in the *Caṅkam* classics. Among the authors of these poems, only 473 are known by their names. The names of the authors of 102 poems are not known. One of the poets, Kapilar accounted for 235 poems in the *Caṅkam* classics. There are four others: Ammūvaṇār (127), Crampōkiyār (110), Pē-

yaṇār (105), Ōtalāntaiyār (103) who composed more than a hundred poems each. Poems in the *Pattuppāṭṭu* anthology contain several lines. *Maturaikkāñci* is the longest poem in the anthology with 782 lines. Four of the ten poems are on the *akam* theme while the rest are on the *puram* theme. All the poems are known for their elaborate descriptions.

Most of the poems in the *Caṅkam* literature are written in an easy-flowing *akaval* metre. Poems in *Kalittokai* and *Paripāṭal* are written in a gorgeous rhythm known respectively as *kali* and *paripāṭal* metres.

Some of the authors of *Caṅkam* poems came from cities while a large number hailed from small villages. They were drawn from many professions such as teachers, bullion dealers, cloth merchants, dispensers, carpenters, astrologers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, soldiers, ministers and minstrels (*pāṇar* and *kūttar*). Women also distinguished themselves as poets during the *Caṅkam* period. Thirty-one persons belonging to the royal family became prominent poets during this period. Notable among the kings are Kōpperuñ-cōḷaṇ, Killivalavaṇ, Cōḷaṇ Nalaṅkiḷli and Pāṇḍyaṇ Neṭunceliyaṇ. It is indeed admirable that these kings had such a poetic talent as to find a place in the body of *Caṅkam* literature. Even those kings who did not possess this rare talent considered it a great honour to be panegyricized by poets. It was also a belief among the kings that those who were applauded by poets alone could achieve eternal happiness in the other world.

### *Relationship Between Poets and Kings*

The Tamil country was under the suzerainty of the Cēra, the Cōḷa and the Pāṇḍya dynastic rulers and their feudatories. References regarding them are found in the famous Sanskrit epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. The capitals of Cēra, Cōḷa and Pāṇḍya rulers were respectively Vanci, Uraiyur and Madurai. These three metropolitan cities were great centres of fine arts and learning. The three dynastic rulers' suzerainty was willingly accepted by all sections of the people. However there were conflicts and wars among the three rulers as well as the vassals. On such occasions the poets used to intervene and mediate for an amicable settlement. There are many references in *Puranānūru* to support this view. At a time when two feudatory chiefs were in confrontation it was the poetess Auvaiyār who assumed the role of a special envoy of Ati-

yamāṇ, visited the royal court of Toṇṭaimāṇ and dissuaded him from plunging the country into a war. When there was trouble in Pēkaṇ's personal life, poets like Aricilkiḷār, Kapilar, Paraṇar and Peruṅkuṇṇūrkilār approached him on behalf of his wife in order to bring about a reconciliation between them. Their intense efforts to arrive at an amicable settlement in Pēkaṇ's family affairs are known to us from the poems of *Puṇanāṇūru*. Another poet Pullārṇūr Eyirriyaṇār prevented a possible civil war, when the people revolted against the Cōḷa king Kōpperuṇcōḷaṇ. His bosom friend was the poet Picirāntaiyar. A Cōḷa king Kiḷḷivaḷavaṇ paid a glowing tribute in a poem to the generosity of Paṇṇaṇ, a philanthropist of his time. Poems in the *Puṇanāṇūru* anthology reveal the honoured place the poets held in the hearts of the rulers of the day. When a Pāṇḍya monarch was angry with his enemies he made a solemn vow that "if he did not defeat his enemies in the ensuing battle, eminent poets like Māṅkuṭimarutaṇ will cease to sing the praise of his country."<sup>15</sup> The reference that kings remembered poets even while they were about to leave for the battlefield shows the high regard they had for poets. Kapilar's friendship with Pāri, the feudal chief of a montane region, is well known in Tamil literature. When Pāri died, the burden of looking after his children fell on Kapilar's shoulders. When there was enmity between Naḷaṅkiḷli and Neṭuṅkiḷli both from the Cōḷa family, poet Kōvūrkiḷār intervened and brought about a settlement and prevented a possible fratricidal war. Two of Kōvūrkiḷār's poems, in *Puṇanāṇūru*, are noted for impassioned expression of his poignant feelings. These poems are in the form of a fervent appeal to stop the indiscriminate killing of Malaiyamāṇ's children and the murder by a Cōḷa king of a poet mistaken for a spy. These poems touch the readers' hearts deeply.<sup>16</sup> The Tamil kings were known for their chivalry and for their conformity to certain universal ethical principles. They listened to the advice of the poets and conformed to the moral principles cited by them. It was because of this that poets were able to write excellent poems in those days which are praised even today.

Though religions like Saivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Jainism and Buddhism were in existence during this period, there was little impact on the *Caṅkam* literature. Only human feelings like happiness and sorrow which are beyond the purview of religion found a place in them. Bards, minstrels, dancers and singers such as



*Pāṇar* (minstrels), *viraliyar* (female dancer and singer), *kūttar* (dancer cum actor), *porunar* (war-bard who travelled with warriors) were found all over the country. They enjoyed the patronage of both the common people and the rulers. There are many references in *Caṅkam* literature to the warm support they had from the commoners and the royalty.

### *Poet Kings*

There are some poems in *Puranānūru* which were composed by the rulers of the Tamil country. The Pāṇḍya king Neṭuñceḷiyaṇ wrote a poem in which he extolled the blessing of good education. The content of the poem runs as follows:

It is always commendable to learn from a teacher either by offering fees or by serving him. An aspirant to knowledge should approach a master and learn things with great humility. He should never feel ashamed of being obedient to his teacher. Even a mother would have some preference for an educated son. The government will certainly reject an uneducated eldest son, and prefer the educated one even if he happens to be the youngest in the family. Despite his low status, a renowned scholar will receive respectful attention from a person of high birth.<sup>17</sup>

The poems of Kōpperuñcōḷaṇ composed before his death arouse a feeling of pity, sympathy and tenderness. He died on the northern outskirts of his country after a prolonged fasting. The poems he wrote during a time of fast will move us deeply. In his hour of distress the Cōḷa king remembered his trusted friend, a poet by the name of Picirāntaiyār. His poem in *Puranānāru* runs in the following manner:

The poet Picirāntaiyār regards me as his very life. Though he did not visit me in my heydays when I possessed power and riches, he will certainly visit me now in my adversity. Though we have not seen each other for a long time, friendship between us is deep and abiding. Sometimes he utters my name forgetting his own. He is such a close friend. If he knows my present woes he will come here without fail.<sup>18</sup>

So sang the Cōḷa king with faith in his poet friend. Picirāntaiyār did come to see his trusted friend, but when he found the Cōḷa king dead, he also fell down dead on the same spot. Unable to bear the king's death, yet another poet, Pottiyār also went on a

fast unto death. The soul-stirring poems of Picirāntaiyār and Pot-tiyār composed before their noble death are found in *Puṇanānūru*. The Cēra king Irumporai's poem in *Puṇanānūru* indicates his sense of honour.<sup>19</sup> In an armed conflict between Irumporai and Ceṅkanan, the Cēra and the Cōḷa kings respectively, the Cēra king was defeated and clapped in prison. Inside the prison he fasted and would not drink even water. At one stage unable to bear the thirst he asked unconsciously for water. When the jailer brought him water he realized his mistake and refused to drink it. At that time he composed a poem which highlights his self-respect. The content of the poem is as follows:

There is a tradition in our family that infants whether born alive or dead at the time of delivery, will be wounded by a sword in order to show its association with the noble quality of a warrior. I am born in such a family of heroic people. Is my life worth living by drinking the enemy's water who tied me like a dog and tortured me in the prison? My clan did not give birth to me to live a life without self-respect.<sup>20</sup>

So said Irumporai in a poem on the sense of honour and died without drinking the water brought by the jailer. Based on this poem, the twentieth century scholar V.K. Cūriyanārāyaṇa Sastriyar wrote a drama entitled *Mānavijayam*.

Women belonging to the royal families distinguished themselves not only as scholars but also as persons of high principles. The king Pūtapāṇṭiyan's wife possessed these sterling qualities. When her husband died she decided to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. At that time some of the venerable persons entreated her not to do so. Then she explained why she had decided to immolate herself and this explanation is found in a poem in *Puṇanānūru*. She addressed those venerable persons thus:

Oh you venerable persons, you should have advised me to die with my husband, instead of preventing me from dying. The fire kindled at the crematorium may be of great anguish to you. But to me, after my husband's death, both the lotus pond and the crematorium fire are one and the same.<sup>21</sup>

Picirāntaiyār's advice to the Pāṇḍya king Arivuṭainampi, is in the form of a poem in *Puṇanānūru*. It is impregnated with ideas relevant to the rulers of modern democracy. The poem points out

to the king the principles of collecting the annual tax from his subjects. The poem is on the following lines:

Even if a small quantity of paddy is harvested, thrashed and made into rice, an elephant could be carefully fed for many days. Instead if the elephant is allowed to feed on its own in the paddy field it would destroy the very field. It would destroy most of the rice by stampeding than by really eating them. Likewise an intelligent king should collect the dues from his subjects with propriety. Only then both the citizens and the country could prosper. Instead if the king with the help of his officials avariciously collects money through heavy taxation from his subjects the country would be reduced to the status of a paddy field where the elephant is allowed to graze. In such a situation neither the king nor the country could prosper. <sup>22</sup>

The poet Mōcīkīraṇṇār's brief advice to a ruler is worth considering here. According to him the basis for this worldly life lies not in food and water but in the ruler, who happens to be the very soul of his country. Therefore a ruler should realise that he being the very life of the country, should rule it benevolently. <sup>23</sup>

Despite such aphorisms, poems in *Puraṇāṇūru* do not suffer for want of literary qualities. No doubt they are based on truth, they possess the quality to captivate the reader's mind. As the pieces of advice come from the very depth of the poet's heart they attract even the modern readers.

The poems of *Puraṇāṇūru* despite their archaic language, appeal to the reader even today because the syntax of the Tamil language has changed very little over the centuries. As a result he finds little difficulty in understanding the real spirit of the poems. Although the modern reader may have difficulties in grasping the meanings of many words in *Puraṇāṇūru* he can master them by reading and understanding the poems. This method is quite easy because, the words in *puṇam* poetry are of Tamil origin and they are related in many ways to words in current usage. One can perceive in the language and style of *puṇam* poems a sort of animation, likely to be experienced by two friends who happen to meet after a long period of separation.

A poem from *Puraṇāṇūru* points out that "the world exists because of the presence of virtuous people who work for the good of others. Such noble-minded persons will not feast alone even if they obtain the unobtainable heavenly nectar. They cherish no

hatred for others. The evils the others fear bother them too, to the detriment of their sleep. They will not hesitate to give up their life to a noble cause. At the same time they will never undertake a mission which would bring them infamy, even if they were to gain the entire wealth of the world. They will never be discouraged. Because of men of such sterling qualities and selflessness the world continues to exist" concludes Iḷamperuvalūti. This profound truth has been brought out with clarity and firmness in every word and line of the poem.<sup>24</sup>

Another eternal truth has been brought out in the same manner by Pūṅkuṇṇār in another poem ("yatam oore, yavarum kelir") from the same work. The essential theme of this poem is but a quintessence of the poet's life-experience. What the philosophers have found out to be the eternal truth, that truth has been brought out in a simple language with clarity. The theme of the poem runs as follow:

To an enlightened person all towns are his home-town. Likewise among the people, not a particular few, but all of them, are his kin. Life's good or bad comes not from others' deeds. In the same manner, pain and relief from pain do not come from the acts of others. To them death is not a new thing nor do they ever consider living a joyous experience. They never give up wordly life with disgust thinking that life is full of miseries. From the knowledge gained by enlightened men we know that the human life, like a raft that follows the course of a river, goes on a chartered path paved by natural causes. Because of this clarity of vision, we neither marvel at the greatness of the great nor despise men of low estate.<sup>25</sup>

This unique poem undoubtedly reflects the poets's life-experience. If poetry is meant to give a permanent and beautiful form to noble experiences, then the above poem is a classic example.

Poems of this nature embodying rare life experiences are many in *Puṇanānūru*. They portray realistic imagination in an artistic form. Scholars have been praising them as unique literary wealth, which has survived the ravages of the last twenty centuries.

Poems in *Puṇanānūru* deal with various themes, besides the most usual ones like the qualities of martial spirit and generosity. The reminiscences of an old man enfeebled by age and disease are beautifully portrayed in one of the poems in *Puṇanānūru*. While brooding over the bygone days, the games played in his youth come before his mind's eye. The old man's recollections run like

this: "In my boyhood days I danced innocently by holding the hands of girls, who used to play with their dolls decorating them with flowers on sand dunes. I also climbed the tall *marutam* tree and came down to a branch closer to the tank. From that vantage position I dived into the water to the bewilderment of onlookers on the shore, and brought forth the sand from the bottom of the tank. I enjoyed my diving skill which caused a long ridge of water curling over and breaking on the shore, as well as my skill in bringing a handful of sand from the bottom of the tank. Where did such youthfulness go? Now my state is a pitiable one. I have to hold a stick for support and yet walk with faltering steps. I am now able to falter out only a few words in between spasm's of coughing. It is indeed pitiable to think of the bygone youthful days."<sup>26</sup> This poem, full of pathos, was composed by an anonymous poet.

In another poem, the poet Nakkīrar conveys a familiar truth in a telling manner. The content of the poem is as follows: "Both the kings who rule the entire world as well as the hunters who hunt the animals day and night, require only a morsel of food and two pieces of clothes. All other enjoyments are almost the same to them. If one wants to enjoy it selfishly all by himself then not only the wealth but all other things would disappear from him."<sup>27</sup>

Many of the ancient rulers of Tamil Nadu were proficient in their mother tongue. They composed poems embodying noble thoughts. Many poems in *Puranānūru* attest to this fact. One of the Cōla kings, Nallurtittiran, explains this noble aim as well as pays tribute to men of great deeds in one of the poems. The poem runs as follows: "During the harvest season rats gather the grains and hide them in their holes. Likewise there are some men who with very little effort acquire wealth and spend the rest of their time in safeguarding them. My life should not be wasted in the company of such men. The tiger on the other hand has certain principles even in eating its prey. One day after a hard chase the tiger killed a wild boar. It fell on the tiger's left side. So it did not devour its prey. The following day the tiger left the cave with a thundering roar and killed a male elephant in such a way as to make it fall on its right side and feasted on it. I like to be in the company of noble men; who could work with great zeal like a tiger."<sup>28</sup>

Another ruler of the Pāṇḍya dynasty, portrays in *Puranānūru* the joy of having children. The contents of the poem is as follows:



“All the accumulated wealth and the good fortune of dining in the company of others has no meaning for those who have no children. The child captivates the minds of people with their toddle. They lift up their hands with the ghee-rice served on plate, spatter and smear it all over their body. Without such cute children, life has no value for the rich.”<sup>29</sup>

Poems composed by persons in many walks of life, including kings are found in *Puṛaṇāṇūru*. Likewise poems on different aspects of life and life situations are to be seen in this collection. There are poems on themes like ‘children are wealth’ or ‘reminiscences of an old man’ in *Puṛaṇāṇūru*.

### *Āruppaṭai*

A poem in which different types of bards direct their fellow professionals to a patron philanthropist, is called an *āruppaṭai*. In the earlier days this type of poem was carefully nurtured into a literary form. Fine arts such as music and dance were carefully nurtured by certain families in the Tamil country. These families were classified into different social groups according to their artistic profession. The male artists, trained to play the musical instruments like *yāl* (lute), *kuḷal* (flute) and *muḷavu* (drum) are known as *pāṇars* (minstrels). Their wives, who themselves played these instruments, are called *pāṇiṇiar* and *pāṭṭiyar* (women minstrels). Women proficient in music and dance are called *viraliyar*. The *kūttars* are men dancers. The actors are called *porunars*. The families of *pāṇar*, *viraliyar*, *kūttar* and *porunar* lived both in villages and cities from the *Caṅkam* period down to the age of *Ālvārs* and *Nāyanmārs* (the age of Bhakti poetry) and preserved the fine arts. Some of the place-names both in Tamil Nadu and in Sri Lanka (especially the predominantly Tamil speaking area of Yālpāṇam) were derived from the family names of these artists. It was but natural for them to be in poverty till they gained recognition for their artistic talents from kings and nobles. Despite their poverty, there were many poets who devoted their time to create works of great literary merit. When they realised that poverty would sap their creative talents, they approached the nobles, praised their munificence and returned with well earned rewards in cash and kind. These gifts enabled them to live above want. The recipients of gifts would then direct their fellow-artists to their patrons so that they too could have a prosperous life. “I can tell you the way

so that you and your relatives can root-out poverty and live a life of happiness. Go and sing the praise of the ruler, who lives in that country. He will offer you many gifts; receive them and thereafter lead a happy life. After approaching and gaining his favours only, I am able to live in reasonable comfort". Such expressions of gratitude are invariably expressed in the form of poetry. The "guidance" poems are called *Āruppaṭai* in Tamil. (The Tamil word *āruppaṭai* can be split into two roots namely *āru* and *paṭi*. The former word means 'route' or 'path' while the latter means 'guide' or 'help to reach'.) The entire ramifications of fine arts could not be explained by one artist. He needed the help of a supporting cast, like the instrumentalists and as a result most of the members of a family were invariably involved in promoting fine arts. As a result the entire family would suffer from poverty. The poets wanted to portray not only the financial difficulties of the minstrels but the eagerness of bards who wanted to direct them to their patron-heroes. Although the composers of *āruppaṭai* literature were poets, they wrote the 'guidance' poems imagining as if a minstrel who had benefited by a chief directed a fellow minstrel to him. The names of the patron noble as well as his fame were invariably historical facts while the descriptions of a fellow minstrel was imaginary. No doubt it was the poet's imagination; the portrayal of a bard's life in the country was undoubtedly real. There are five *āruppaṭai* poems in the *Pattuppāṭṭu* anthology. *Āruppaṭai* poems are also found in *Patirruppattu* and *Puranānūru*.

It was a tradition in the later day epics and purāṇas to describe the four-fold landscape, rivers and other objects of nature. This tradition seems to have had its origin in *āruppaṭai* poems. Their length varies from 248 to 500 lines. While describing the route leading to the country of the patron chief or noble, the poet describes the various regional landscapes too. These landscape descriptions in fact portray the topography of the ancient Tamil country.

### *Tirumurukāruppaṭai*

Nakkīrar is the author of the devotional poem, *Tirumurukāruppaṭai*. It tells us how a devotee who had attained the grace of Lord Murugaṇ, shows a fellow seeker the way to attain His grace. Devotional poems in praise of Murugaṇ and Tirumāl are found in *Paripāṭal*. However in the *Caṅkam* literature

## Features of the Five Landscapes

Characteristic flower (name of region and poetic genre)	Lover's union	Elopement, hard- ship, separation from lover or parents	Patient waiting, domesticity	Lover's unfaith- fulness, sulking, scenes	Anxiety in love, separation
Landscape	<i>Kuṛiñci</i> mountains	wasteland (mountain or forest parched by summer)	<i>Mullai</i> forest pasture	<i>Marutam</i> cultivated countryside	<i>Neytal</i> seashore
Season	cold season, early frost	summer, late frost	rainy season	all seasons	all seasons
Time	night	midday	late evening	morning	nightfall
Hero	<i>poruppan, verpan, cilampan, naṭan</i>	<i>viṭali kālai, mīli</i>	<i>kuṛumporai nāṭan tōṇṇal</i>	<i>ūraṇ, makilṇaṇ</i>	<i>cērpṇaṇ, pulamṇaṇ</i>
Heroine	<i>Kuṛatti, koṭicci</i>	<i>eyiṛi</i>	<i>manaivi, kiṭatti</i>	<i>kiṭatti, maṇaivi</i>	<i>paratti, nuṭaicci</i>
People	<i>kuṛavar, kāṇavar (m) kuṛattiyar (f)</i>	<i>eyiṇar, maṇavar (m) eyiṛiyar, maṇattiyar (f)</i>	<i>āyar, itaiyar (m) aycciyar, iṭaicciyar (f)</i>	<i>uḷavar, kaṭaiyar (m) uḷattiyar, kaṭaicciyar (f)</i>	<i>nuḷaiyar, aḷavar, para- tar (m) nuḷaicciyar, aḷattiyar, parattiyar (f)</i>
Occupation	hunting, digging roots, seasonal culti- vation of paddy and millet, guarding millet and paddy fields, gathering honey	soldering, marauding, highway robbery	cultivation of minor crops like <i>varaku, cāmai</i> etc., cowherding, shepherding	agriculture	fishing, making salt
Pastimes	<i>veriyāṭal</i> (rapturous dance), bathing in waterfalls and streams	dancing	<i>kuṛavaḷ</i> dance, bull-fight, bathing in river	bathing in rivers and ponds, festivals	bathing in sea
Settlements	<i>cirṛūr, cirukuṭi</i>	<i>kuṛumpu</i>	<i>pāṭi</i>	<i>pērūr, mūtūr</i>	<i>pākkam, paṭṭiṇam</i>

## Trees

sandal, teak, Aquila  
*Acōka*, *Nākam*,  
bamboo*uḷṇai*, *pālai*, *ōmai*,  
*iruppai**koṇṇai*, *kāyā*  
*kuruntam*

## Flowers

*kaṇṇi*, *vēṅkai*,  
*kaṭampū**kurām*, *marām*,  
*pālai**mullai*, *kullai*,  
*tōṇṇi*, *piṭavam*,  
*koṇṇai**neytal*, *tālampu*, *muntakam*  
*atampumpū*lotus, lily,  
aquatic flowers

## Food

mountain-rice,  
bamboo rice, millet

no staple diet

*varaku*, *cāmai*  
*mutirai*

rice

fish, food-stuff obtained  
through barter from other  
regions

## Drum

*ionṭakam**tuṭi**ēṇṇkōl*Musical  
instruments and  
tune*kuṇṇi* lyre  
*kuṇṇi**pālai* lyre  
*paṇṇuram**mullai* lyre  
*cāṇṇi**kiṇai* (for harvesting)  
*muḷavu* (for wedding)*mūṇkōl* (for fishing)  
*nāvāy* (for sailing)*vaḷari* lyre  
*cevvaḷippan**marutam* lyre  
*marutappan*

## God

*Cēy* (Murukan)*Kaṇṇi* (Turkkai)*Neṭumāl* or  
*Tirumāl**Intiraṇ**Varuṇaṇ*

## Notes: (1)

*Kuṇṇi*: *Strobilanthes* and *Barleria* species said to grow at an altitude of 6000 ft and flower only once in 12 years. It is bluish in colour.  
*Mullai*: *Jasminum sambac*. Arabian jasmine. *Marutam*: *Terminalia tomentosa*. *Neytal*: Indian water lily and white in colour. *Nymphaea louts alba*: blue nelumbo. *Pālai*: it is a silvery-leaved ape-flower, *Mimuscops hexandrus*: grows in barren lands, is evergreen, blossoms small and white. *Vēṅkai*: flower of Kino tree; *Glorisa superba*. *Kaṭampū*: *Eugenia racemosa*. *Kurāmpū*: *Webera corymbosa*. *Koṇṇai*: *Cassia*. *Kullai*: *Cannabis*. *Tālampū*: *Pandanus*. *Acōkam*: *Uvaria longifolia*. *ōmai*: *Salvadara persica*. *Iruppai*: *Bassia longifolia*.  
 (2) The classification on landscapes and their features was based on the Tamil grammatical works such as *Tolkāppiyam* and *Nampi-akapporul*. The former is the oldest grammatical work now available in Tamil. The latter belongs to the medieval period and its author is Naṅkavirāca-nampi.

*Tirumurukāruppaṭai* is the only longest devotional poem, consisting of 317 lines. It is recited even now by devotees of Lord Murukaṇ in some families in Tamil Nadu. The poem gives a description of the Murukaṇ temples of the ancient Tamil country as well as the types of prayers offered in them. The description of nature in this poem captivates the reader's mind. The first section of the poem gives a description of the Murukaṇ Temple at Tirupparaṅkunṇam hill, its scenic beauty, the presiding deity of the temple as well as the battles waged by Lord Murukaṇ against the evil forces typified in the person of Cūraṇ. The second section of the poem gives a mystical interpretation of the six faces and twelve hands of Murukaṇ and also the importance of the temple at Tiruchendur. The greatness of sages who come to pray to Murukaṇ as well as the devotional qualities of women who come to the Paḷani hills are explained in the third section of the poem. The fourth section speaks about the devotees who came to offer their prayers to Murukaṇ, the presiding deity at Tiruvērakam. The manner in which the people of the mountain region pray to Murukaṇ is narrated in the fifth section. The final section besides describing the waterfalls at Paḷamutircōlai, explains in detail the shrines where Murukaṇ is principally worshipped as well as the manner in which an aspirant could obtain His grace.

So skinny are the holy men (Muruka Bhaktas)  
That their breast bones can be numbered  
Several noons have they spent in ritual fasting  
Unsullied are their hearts  
Without anger and animosity  
Too mystical to be understood  
By the best of intellects  
Realized souls are they  
Neither lust nor ire persists  
Nor sorrow is known to them.<sup>30</sup>

The foregoing lines describe the qualities of sages praying to Murukaṇ. The sages are so lean, that their chest bones are prominent on their bodies. They spend several days in deep meditation without food or water. They are pure souls, having only love for all. They possess a divine knowledge which cannot be understood even by the most learned persons. They can be regarded as leaders



of the most knowledgeable men. They have neither greed nor anger, and are men of enlightenment. Although unaware of difficulties, they by nature possess a determined mind.

Besides *Tirumurukāṛruppatai*, another lengthy poem *Neṭ-unālvātai* attests to Nakkīrar's capacity to admire the scenic beauty of nature. In fact *Tirumurukāṛruppatai* begins with a description of the morning sun rising from the deep sea. As the poem progresses one notices the elaborate natural description of montane regions like the Tirupparaṅkuṇṇam Hills. Towards the end of the poem, there is a soul-stirring description of a waterfall which roars down from the Paḷamutiroōlai. The last 22 lines of *Tirumurukāṛruppatai* is nothing but the description of the waterfall. The Tamil term *muruku* means Lord Murugaṅ as well as beauty. The aptness of these two meanings will not leave the minds of those who read this wonderful devotional poem.

### *Porunarāṛruppatai*

The lay *Porunarāṛruppatai*, which extols the greatness of the Cōḷa king, Karikāḷaṅ, contains 248 lines. From this poem one knows the cordiality that existed between the Cōḷa king and the bards and minstrels and the importance of River Kāvēri. It also describes the alluring features of *yāl* music. If the bards encounter any highwaymen on their treacherous route, they will play some tune on their *yāl*, which will not only entice them but force them to abandon their weapons. It is known from the poem that the head of a bard's family was called *Ēḷiṅ Talaiva*, which in fact means one who is skilled in seven types of rhythm. Further it is known that the Cōḷa king will not only alleviate their sufferings but also give them expensive silk robes to wear. Some of the fabrics given as gifts will be too fine for the eye to follow the warp or the woof and it will resemble the discarded skin of the snake. He will also give bards a chariot drawn by four horses as a gift. When they take leave of the king, he will walk seven steps along with them and see them off. The custom of walking along with the guests for seven steps and bidding them farewell still obtains among the Tamils.

### *Cirupāṇāṛruppatai*

The lay *Cirupāṇāṛruppatai* which portrays the poverty of a

minstrel's family, has 269 lines. The description of the minstrel's house sheds light on the distress of the family. The walls are old and the destruction caused by termites is seen everywhere. The rafters are falling off. The kitchen is covered with dust and fungus. The abject poverty affects not merely the family of the minstrel but also the dog which belongs to them. The dog has given birth to a litter of puppies in the kitchen. Whenever they approach their mother for milk, she barks and chases them out. The abject poverty has killed the dog's motherliness. Despite the dismal condition obtaining in the house, the housewife realises her responsibility to feed the members of the family. She is unable to get anything except the greens available at the backyard. She brings them in, cooks them without salt and serves them to all the members of the family. Before doing so, she closes the door, lest their poverty should be known to outsiders. Since the minstrels have such a sense of honour in them, despite compelling want, they have never approached others with a begging bowl. Even when they approach a munificent patron, they never ask for anything. Nor have they approached all and sundry. Only when they have heard from their fellow minstrels about a patron's generosity, they visit him and sing the greatness of his forefathers and praise his country's scenic beauty. The patron too recognises their needs, respects their self-respect and offers them gifts befitting their great merit.

### *Perumpāṇārruppaṭai*

The lay *Perumpāṇārruppaṭai* portrays a minstrel's family. The poem has 500 lines. It speaks about the greatness to Toṇṭaimān Iḷantiraiyaṇ's rule at Kancipuram, his country, the harbour town, the light-house, and the fertility of the montane region. We learn from this particular poem, that when the king serves food to the minstrels he does it with kindness, cheerfulness, and child-like happiness.

### *Malaipaṭukaṭām*

The lay *Malaipaṭukaṭām* gives an account of a dancer-cum-actor's family. It has 583 lines. The poem has another name *Kūttarārruppaṭai*, which means a lay that guides dancers and actors to a munificent patron. It explains various sounds that emanate from a mountainous region. The phrase *Malaipāṭukatām* taken from the poem has been considered very striking. The mountain is metap-

horically compared to an elephant and the sounds emanating from the mountain is again compared to the secretion oozing from the mountain. As such the phrase *Malaipaṭukaṭām* has a poetic appeal. The poem describes the artistic life of dancers and actors as well as the musical instruments used by them.

### *Mullaippāṭṭu*

Among the love poems in the *Pattuppāṭṭu* anthology, *Mullaippāṭṭu* and *Kuṛiṇcippāṭṭu* are unique ones. There is no intention to praise any king or munificent patron. Likewise neither a country nor a city is described. The main aim is to explain human love, the basic theme of *akam* poems. *Mullaippāṭṭu* is the shortest poem in the *Pattuppāṭṭu* anthology and has only 103 lines. The essential theme of *mullaṭṭiṇai* poems is to highlight the wifely patience and self-control shown by a heroine, till her warrior husband returns after a successful military campaign. The hero who is away on a military campaign must return before the rainy season. If the warriors remain in the battlefield during the monsoon then the seasonal harvest will be affected in the countries involved in war. Therefore it is a custom among the warriors to return to their respective countries before the rainy season. Although indications point to the arrival of the rainy season, her warrior husband has not returned from his campaign. While she is thinking of the delay, she hears the sound of the chariot wheels. This, in short, is the theme of *Mullaippāṭṭu*. The poem describes the transformed scenery of the forest region during the rainy season.

### *Kuṛiṇcippāṭṭu*

It is an amatory idyll of 261 lines. It narrates the pre-marital love of two young people living in a hilly region. Their love is not known to their parents. The hero encounters many obstacles in keeping up his nocturnal trysts with his lady love. If he fails to meet her, the heroine becomes love-lorn. Her love sickness is misconstrued as illness by her parents and they seek remedy for it. The maids intervene and reveal in an appropriate manner the real cause of the sickness to the heroine's mother. Towards the end of the poem, the poet describes the heroine's eyes as bedewed with tears. The famous poet, Kapilar is the author of this poem. According to the colophon, Kapilar composed the poem to impart the Tamil literary tradition to Pirakattan, a king of Northern India.

**Paṭṭinappālai**

This is one other poem on the theme of human love in the *Pattuppāṭṭu* anthology. It depicts the hero's separation from the heroine, which is in fact the main theme of *pālaṭṭinai*. The poem not only highlights the importance of Kāvīrippūmpaṭṭiṇam as the primary port-city of the Tamil country but also glorifies the celebrated Cōḷa king, Karikāḷaṇ. His spear and sceptre which are used as similes, afford the opportunity for the poet to glorify his prowess as well as his justice. Likewise his harbour-town Kāvīrippūmpaṭṭiṇam is also praised in this poem. Though the central theme of the poem is human love, much of the space is devoted to glorify the Cōḷa king and the Cōḷa capital. The hero plans to make a journey to a foreign country in search of wealth. He is hesitant when he reflects on the pangs of separation his beloved would undergo on his departure. Finally he decides not to leave his beloved and desists from his contemplated journey. The poem is composed as a monologue, at a time when the hero is tormented by internal conflict. This central theme of the poem runs as follows: "Oh my heart! even if I were to obtain the wealthiest Kāvīrippūmpaṭṭiṇam I will not travel leaving my beloved here. To seek riches, I have to traverse the most dreadful jungle paths. They are more frightful than the deadliest of Karikāḷaṇ's spear. But my lady's shoulders are more pleasurable than Karikāḷaṇ's benevolent sceptre. Therefore, I will not undertake the journey leaving her alone." This central theme of the poem is brought out only in six lines whereas the Cōḷa capital which has been cited as a simile in one of those six lines, is vividly described in the beginning of the poem in 217 lines. In the last 80 lines of the poem, the Cōḷa monarch Karikāḷaṇ's prowess and greatness are described.

This long poem is a tribute to the ancient glory of the Tamil country. It narrates in detail the flourishing maritime trade of the Tamil country, the glorious harbour town Kāvīrippūmpaṭṭiṇam with all its foreign residents, the stamping of Cōḷa's famous tiger mark on the incoming goods, the tariff policy pursued at the port, the merchandise heaped upon the wharfs and the prosperous local trade. While describing the market place, it makes a particular mention of the uprightness of the traders. It is a matter of pride to know from this poem that the ancient Tamil merchants were so honest that while doing barter trade they neither took too much nor gave too little.

While bartering their trade goods  
 The traders of Kavirippumpatinam  
 Neither took too much  
 Nor gave too little.<sup>31</sup>

It is known that merchants hoisted different types of flags in front of their shops indicating the goods they dealt in. Likewise the scholars too put up their own flags while engaged in debates.

### *Neṭunalvātai*

The lay *Neṭunalvātai* is yet another interesting poem in 188 lines on the theme of human love. The heroic king is away in the winter camp facing many foes; while the queen in the palace is plunged in grief due to separation. The palace maids try to console her. They pray to *Koṟṟavai*, the goddess of victory, that she should grant the king, who is at the winter camp with a mission, a quick victory in the battle in order to rejoin his love-lorn lady. This is the central theme of the poem. Around this there are descriptions of the royal bed-chamber as well as the winter-camp where the king is absorbed in his work. There is one other description of the 'Northerly Wind', which by metonymy implies the winter season. The chill wind accompanied by rain blows into the palace, the winter camp and aggravates the misery. The wind is all-pervasive, brings rain and biting cold. It hurts the shepherd who grazes the sheep in the forest. Monkeys and birds too are affected by the chilly Northerly Wind. Because of the chill in the air the cows detest their calves which come to drink milk. The poet who has shown the intensity of the winter in the forest region, shows its dreariness in the city as well. Even the main highways are deserted, except the drunkards who can neither feel the cold wind nor the drizzle. Within the houses too the effects of the chilly wind is discernible. Since the sky is cloudy, it is difficult for the family women to know the time to light the evening lamps for prayer. However when they see some flowers bloom, they think that the evening has come and start lighting the lamps. Northerly Wind affects the life of pigeons too. They are unable to fly out of their nests in search of food, because of the chill. The drizzle prevents them from moving out of their nests even for a little relaxation. Since they are confined to their nests and stand static they alternately change their legs to ease the pain. The stone which is used to



make sandalwood paste is also reminded of the dreary winter, for it is lying idle in a corner of the house. It is frequently used in summer, but now lies in a corner untouched by human hand. Likewise, the handfans too are lying idle covered with cobwebs. The water jars are kept unused, while the charcoal burners are seen everywhere. Then suddenly the scene shifts to the winter camp, where too one feels the impact of the chilly Northerly Wind. At dead of night the chivalrous king inspects the wounded elephants and horses, pats them lovingly and consoles them. While inspecting, the strong Northerly Wind blows off his upper garment which he holds with his left hand. The right hand is, at that time, on the shoulders of a wounded warrior, giving him consolation. The gushing wind accompanied by rain, crashes with a bang on the king's umbrella. The lamp, inside the tent, flutters in the wind and its flame turns toward the southern side.

One notices the impact of the Northerly Wind throughout the poem, befitting its title *Neṭunalvātai*, which means literally "The Good Long Northerly Wind". The title has its own significance. It is a long wind which is at once a lasting grief and a blessing in disguise. To whom is it bad? And to whom is it good? It is certainly a prolonged grief for the queen, who is lying on the royal bed splashing the bedewed tears with her finger tips. It is indeed a blessing in disguise, for the king's sense of responsibility makes him stay in the winter camp consoling the wounded warriors, elephants and horses. Thus the two adjectives *neṭu* and *nal* in the title *Neṭunalvātai* indicate the two different minds and their emotions.

The hero and the heroine are not mentioned by their names. Nor are there any references to their country. Therefore it is an imaginative love poem, falling under the category of *akam* poetry. The commentators do not accept this point of view. While describing the winter camp, a reference is made to the spear, bedecked with *neem* flowers. Since the *neem* garland belongs to the Pāṇḍya dynasty of kings, his identity becomes clear and therefore the commentators contend that it is not *akam* poetry. If there is no reference to that one word, "*neem*" there is no reason to doubt that it is an imaginative *akam* poem. Such was the force of literary convention in those days. The poem is attributed to the celebrated poet Nakkīrar.

*Maturaikkāñci*

This is the longest lay in the *Pattupāṭṭu* anthology. It contains 782 lines. One can notice different types of description of Madurai, one of the ancient cities in the Tamil country. The celebrated hero of the poem is Neṭuñceliyaṇ, a king of the Pāṇḍya dynasty. The purpose of Kāñcittiṇai is to point out the impermanence of wordly life and urge people to pursue a path of righteousness. Since this is part of the training imparted to a monarch living in Madurai, the poem is called *Maturaikkāñci*. The poet, besides instructing the monarch, blesses that his victories should increase like the waxing moon on the west while the greatness of his foes should decrease like the waning moon on the east.

There are many references in the poem regarding the greatness of the Pāṇḍya dynasty, the Pāṇḍya kingdom, the forefathers of king Neṭuñceliyaṇ, their noble qualities as well as their achievements. Nevertheless one finds a detailed description solely of the imperial city of Madurai. The description of the city is in itself very unique. The poem makes one forget the long time-span of two thousand years and invites him into the Pāṇḍya country crossing the River Vaikai, passing the fort with its moat going through the entrance of the old city of Madurai and witness its undying glory. In its heyday one can see after going through the lengthy main roads, the morning bazaar of *nāḷaṅkāṭi* where the vendor's noise resembles the sound made during the festival. It makes one whole forenoon to go round and see the shops on the main roads. One sees the evening bazaar of *allāṅkāṭi* and hears the music which emanates from temples. Prayer is in progress in the Buddhist pagodas. In the Jain monastries, the monks are in deep meditation. Many articles of excellent workmanship are on sale in the evening bazaar. There are many traders from foreign countries too. The sound that emanates from their speech resembles the chirping of birds. The night creeps in, before one can go round the bazaar. Hither and thither people light the evening lamp for prayer. The full-moon shedding its light heightens the beauty of the city. Women beautify themselves using cosmetics. Prostitutes are engaged in their going business. Family women are absorbed in their daily chore. Music and dance performances are on. Women and children return home after prayer in the temple. It is now midnight, people close their gates and retire. The pancake vendors and others doze off with their sweetmeats set right in front of them. The night

sentries go round the city. With these scenes midnight recedes. Early morning twilight is seen. The description of the early morning activities of the people is graphic too. The Brahmans chant the Vedas. With a humming sound bees search for honey in flowers. Musicians play the *murutappan* (early morning song) on *yal* (lyre) instrument. Elephants and horses eat fodder. Shopkeepers tidy up their shops. Family women open the gates and clean the entrance of their homes. People sing *Tiruppalliyelucci* (special morning song) songs in the morning. The temple drum sounds; cocks crow; swans quack, and peacocks coo. The streets are cleaned. It is morning. Thus in 354 lines, the poet takes us on a grand tour of the ancient city of Madurai. The description is, as it were, of a person who has seen the city humming with activity for full twenty-four hours.

### Similes Galore

Many similes in later works are borrowed from the *Caṅkam* literature. Since those similes are apt and blended well with the text of the *Caṅkam* poems they are used in later works too without undue modification. While on a journey to a foreign land, a lover who has left his wife behind sees the moon rising on the edge of a distant mountain. Immediately his thought goes back to his beloved and he compares the moon with her beautiful face saying, "that moon which belongs to me is beyond the mountain." The moon at daybreak is compared to the face of a lady pining in grief over her husband's separation. The eighth day waxing moon is compared to a woman's forehead. Some of the aquatic flowers like lotus and water lily are compared to a woman's eyes. Eyes shedding tears are compared to water dripping from rain-drenched flowers. All these similes are found both in post-*Caṅkam* and modern literary works. To cite an example, post-*Caṅkam* works compare the woman's eyes to *māvaṭu*, a very tender green mango. The same simile is used in an elaborate form in one of the poems of *Akanā-nūru*, where the eye is compared to a "tender mango cut into two with a steel knife". The comparison between the eye and the mango has some sense only when the simile is fully described as in *Akanā-nūru*. The aptness of the simile is appreciated only when the tender mango is cut horizontally into two equal parts with a rusted knife. Only then the core of the tender mango will resemble the pupil of the eye; and the surrounding area resemble the white part

of the eye. Likewise the aptness of the similes in the later works can be discerned only in their place of origin, the *Caṅkam* classics.

### *Literary Criticism in Tolkāppiyam*

The oldest extant Tamil grammar, the *Tolkāppiyam*, does not lay down rules for Tamil alphabets and formation of words. The work, which is in three parts, analyses phonology and phonemes in the first part, syntax in the second part; and the third part *poruḷatikāram* discusses literary conventions. Tolkāppiyar, the author of this grammatical work, after analysing the available literary works of his days explains their classification, form and content. He has analysed various literary emotions from the angle of dramatic art. Besides analysing similes and metaphors, he has written an elaborate section on Tamil prosody and poetics. In that section references are made of fantasy, folk songs and prose. Also references to such new genres like novels (newness or *viruntu*) and folk-tales (old or *tonmai*) are found. Finally he has made a pointed reference to literary conventions. It is laudable that *Tolkāppiyam* is such a comprehensive work on Tamil literary theories. As the western scholars regard Aristotle's *Poetics* as the groundwork of literary analysis, so the Tamil scholars use Tolkāppiyar's third section in *Tolkāppiyam* for analysing Tamil literary works. The *Tolkāppiyam* contains roughly 1600 sutras. Out of this, 650 are in the third section. Over the years, though, Tamil literature has grown to such an extent as to outstrip the conventions laid down in *Tolkāppiyam*, the third section of this work has relevance even today, for those who analyse the *Caṅkam* classics. An in-depth analysis of the literary conventions of the *Eṭṭuttokai* and the *Pattuppāṭṭu* are found in the third section of *Tolkāppiyam* as well as in its commentaries.

### NOTES

1. Saiva Siddhanta Publisher (ed.) *Kalilttokai* : Marutakkali, 2nd edn (Madras, 1978), pm. 67, p. 5.
2. U.V. Cāmināta Iyer (ed.), *Kuruntokai*, 3rd edn. (Madras, 1955), pm 92, p. 213.
3. A. Nārāyaṇacāmi Iyer (ed.), *Narriṇai Nānūru*, reprint (Madras, 1976), pm 397 : 7-9, p. 447.
4. Murray & Co., (ed.), *Akanānūru* (Madras, 1958), pm 339 : 11-14, p. 187.

5. Pāratiyār, *Pāratiyār Kavitaikaḷ* (Madras, 1976), p. 397.
6. P.V. Comacuṅtararaṇar (ed.), *Akanāṇūru*, Re. ed. (Madras, 1974) pm 347, p. 126.
7. Ibid., pm 375, p. 202.
8. AN, pm 289 : 14-17, p. 160.
9. AN, pm 352 : 14-17, p. 193.
10. Pinnathur A. Nārāyaṇacāmi Iyer (ed.), *Narrinai Nanuru*, Re. edn (Madras, 1976), pm 110, p. 189.
11. Murray & Co., (ed.), *Kalittokai* (Madras, 1957), pm 9 : 12-20, p. 11.
12. Murray & Co., (ed.), *Puranāṇūru* (Madras, 1958), pm 154 : 8-13, p. 73.
13. KT, pm 18, p. 48.
14. PN, pm 142, p. 68.
15. PN, pm 72 : 13-18, p. 43.
16. PN, pms 46-47, p. 31.
17. PN, pm 183, p. 87.
18. PN, pm 215, p. 101.
19. PN, pms 212, p. 99; 217, pp. 101-102,; 222-23, p. 103.
20. PN, pm 74, p. 44.
21. PN, pm 246, p. 112-113.
22. PN, pm 184, p. 88.
23. PN, pm 186, p. 88.
24. PN, pm 182, p. 87.
25. PN, pm 192, p. 90.
26. PN, pm 243, pp. 111-12.
27. PN, pm 189, p. 89.
28. PN, pm 190, p. 89.
29. PN, pm 188, p. 89.
30. U.V. Cāmināta Iyer (ed.) *Pattuppāṭṭu* 5th edn (Madras, 1956), pm. 1 : 129-36, p. 16.
31. Ibid., pm 9 : 210-11, p. 524.



## Ethical Literature

(100–500 A.D.)

The poets, who had been composing poems on various aspects of human emotions like love, prowess and generosity as well as the eternal beauty of nature in the *Caṅkam* period, came to write in the subsequent periods on questions relating to moral principles and rules of conduct. This period is known as the post-*Caṅkam* period or the period of ethical literature. It is said that during this time the traditional rulers belonging to the Tamil country such as the Cēras, the Cōlas and the Pāṇḍyas seem to have lost their political power to intruders, popularly known as Kalabhras, and disturbed the peaceful life of the people. In an age of internal uncertainty and near chaos, there is no chance for the poets to speak about the charms of life. Since the day to day life itself became so complex, it was difficult for the poets to show how life should be lived and what moral precepts and code of conduct should govern it. Some of the ethical works written between 100 and 500 A.D. are known under the blanket term *Patineṇkīlkkanaṅku*. The term *kīlkkanaṅku* refers to poetical works composed in couplets and quatrains. The famous epics, *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* were written with a view to propagate religious truths among the people of this period. The former is a Jain work, while the latter is a Buddhist work.

All the works in the *Patineṇkīlkkanaṅku* anthology are not

ethical works. Among the eighteen works five are on *akam* theme or human love, one on war and the rest twelve are ethical works.

### ***Tirukkural***

***Tirukkural*** holds a prime place among the ethical works. It is written in *kural venpā*, a two-line verse; the first line having four *cīrs* (or foot) and the second three *cīrs*. Since the whole work is written in *kural* verses, it bears the name ***Tirukkural***. Other names like *Muppāl* (a book containing three sections), *Poyyāmoli* (a book of unfailing truth) and *Vāyurai Vāḷṭu* (a book of moral precepts) never gained currency among the people. It is ascribed to a poet, whose name or place of birth is unknown. However he has been called *Tiruvalluvar* which, in fact, may be the name of a clan or an occupational group. Many anecdotes surround his name, although literary critics give no credence to them. However from his work certain facts are implicitly known about him. He should have been a consummate scholar, led a harmonious family life, possessed a sound knowledge of political science, lived to a ripe old age, practised religious eclecticism, maintained unshakeable faith in dharma but should have rejected religious symbols and superstitious beliefs.

### ***Classification***

Out of the four eternal values, virtue, wealth, love and liberation, ***Tirukkural*** dwells only on the first three aspects in 1,330 *kural:venpās* or two-line verses of unequal length. Since the concept of liberation is beyond the comprehension of the human mind and could be achieved by leading a righteous life in this world, *Tiruvalluvar* would have left it severely alone without even attempting to explain it. However the chapter or *Meyyūṇartal* or realisation of truth points out the way of attaining liberation.

There are ten couplets in each chapter. Each chapter dwells on a particular human quality or principle. *Tiruvalluvar* has explained the entire concept of virtue in the first part of the book in 300 *kuraḷs* or in 30 chapters. The second part of the book contains 700 *kuraḷs* or 70 chapters. In that part *Tiruvalluvar* speaks at length about the mechanics of politics, the qualities of ministers as well as the subjects. The ideal aspects of human love are described in detail in the third part of the book in 250 *kuraḷs* or 25 chapters. Those who read the first part of the book will be reminded of the

gospel of Buddha. In the second part one can learn the consummate political scientists' considered views. The role of Tiruvaḷḷuvar in the third part of the book is that of a superb poet who makes his characters speak on the virtues of human love.

### *Ecclecticism*

It is really suprising that a person, who lived several centuries ago, was able to write a book acceptable to all religious denominations. As a result of the eclectic nature, all works that succeeded *Tirukkural* not merely borrowed its idea but freely used many of the choice phrases found in it. When religious leaders were engaged in polemics, they upheld *Tirukkural* and cited proofs to the effect that Tiruvaḷḷuvar belonged to their religion.

The most important feature of the book is to transcend all man-made limitations, be that religion or any other thing, to subject the human mind to a critical analysis and to project only the eternal values. Tiruvaḷḷuvar succeeded in overcoming all limitations and in pointing out the fundamental truth to everyone. At a time when caste distinctions came to the fore, he declared without fear, "that all human beings are equal in their birth."<sup>1</sup> Answering the question "What is penance?" he emphasised, that the "truest form of penance consists in enduring all pains and harming no creature."<sup>2</sup> While giving a definition to virtue in the chapter entitled *Arannvaliyuruttal* (iteration of virtue's worth), "To be quite free from mental blots is virtue, the rest is ostentation."<sup>3</sup>

The *Tirukkural* is the only book in Tamil which has attracted the best minds to write commentaries. Several centuries ago, ten commentators wrote commentaries on this work. Even now new explanations and commentaries are being written. Translations of this work are available in most of the Indian and foreign languages. Such eminent men as Mahatma Gandhi have praised the greatness of this work. Albert Schweitzer, the famous German philosopher, paid a glorious tribute to the greatness of *Tirukkural* in the following manner:

On the most varied questions concerning the conduct of man to himself and to the world its (Tirukkural's) utterances are characterised by nobility and good sense. There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom.<sup>4</sup>

### *Steadfastness in Virtue*

Tiruvalluvar had a firm belief in the retributive law of virtue. "Even through forgetfulness one should not think of ruining others. If he does, then virtue will ruin him." This idea is well brought out in the following *kural*:

To ruin one thro' forgetfulness e'en, thou shalt not plot,  
A plot to ruin him who plots, by Nemesis will be wrought. <sup>5</sup>

There are some works which overlook the means to be adopted to achieve an end. They argue that if the end is likely to be good, ignore the means to be followed to gain that end. This view is not acceptable to Tiruvalluvar. Whether or not one is able to achieve the cherished goal, the means followed to reach that goal should always be a noble one. This view has been reiterated in several *kural venpas*. "Even if one sees one's mother starving to relieve it one should not do the deeds the noble men reprove."<sup>6</sup> "Those who give material help or alms will inherit heaven. Even if heaven is denied, it is still good to give."<sup>7</sup>

It is Tiruvalluvar's view that man should lead a life of high ideals. Sometimes a virtuous life may be a hindrance to worldly life, still it is worth living. According to him, even in the face of death one should uphold virtue. This high ideal is emphasised in many of the *kurals*. "It is better to die rather than lead a deceitful life of a back-biter. It will give him the benefit of what the Dharma prescribes."<sup>8</sup> "Even if one were to lose his self through his benevolence, then such a loss is worth incurring by the sale of one's life."<sup>9</sup> "One must cast off forthwith the wealth that is gained by unjust means, even if it were to yield good."<sup>10</sup> "If a man does love himself, let him not commit any deed whatsoever which has evil consequences."<sup>11</sup> "Commit no evil, even if you are poor; if you do, you must endure great poverty."<sup>12</sup> "Even a covetous thought is sin, therefore do not think to grab another's property by fraud."<sup>13</sup> "It is the principle of virtuous men to refrain from injuring those who had injured them with enmity."<sup>14</sup> "Even if one loses one's own life, one should not do anything that will destroy the life of another."<sup>15</sup>

Besides emphasising these noble ideals, Tiruvalluvar shows unmistakably the steps to be taken to lead a virtuous life. To the question how to bear with others' evil acts, he gives a fitting answer

in the following manner: "Even death-like injuries will be forgiven, the moment an act of kindness done before is remembered."<sup>16</sup> How to refrain from inflicting injury on others while in anger? This question again he answers suitably. It is usual that a person gets angry only with those who are comparatively weaker than themselves. In such circumstances anger could be got over by contemplating his own reaction when those who are stronger than himself try to hurt him.<sup>17</sup>

### *Worldly Wisdom*

In the second part of the book, Tiruvalluvar points out the ethnical codes that will enable a person to lead a meritorious life in this world. The importance of improving knowledge is emphasised in four chapters, "Learning" (Ch.40), "Non-Learning" (Ch.41), "Listening to the Learned" (Ch.42) and "Wisdom" (Ch.43). In the chapter of "Learning", he says, "One must acquire the knowledge he should possess faultlessly and after learning must tread the path it has shown him."<sup>18</sup> In "Non-Learning", he points out that "the wealth in the hands of an ignorant person is more dangerous than the poverty of a learned person."<sup>19</sup> To a question, "What is wisdom?" his answer is, "to restrain the mind from straying, and turn it good deflecting it from evil."<sup>20</sup>

Tiruvalluvar's ideas on various aspects of politics have relevance even today. Monarchy was the order of his days. What he pronounced as royal codes for the kings of his days, could even now be applicable to the democratic rulers. In *Ceṅkōṇmai* or "The Rule of the Right Sceptre", he points out that "the world will constantly embrace the feet of a monarch who rules his subjects with justice."<sup>21</sup> Again to a monarch, "It is not the spear but the unbending sceptre (or rule of law) that will yield victory."<sup>22</sup> "A ruler who extracts money from his subjects unjustly is no better than a highway-robber holding a lance and dispossessing the victims of their wealth."<sup>23</sup> "To own some wealth is more painful than chill penury, for those who live under the sceptre of an unjust king."<sup>24</sup> "The tears of grief shed by the oppressed subjects are a strong weapon which will wipe off a monarch's wealth."<sup>25</sup> Transcending all limitations, Tiruvalluvar has formulated a set of general rules for government and administration. Therefore, his pronouncements have relevance and validity even to the present day democratic system of government. As a result, *Tirukkural* is applauded



as a "universal book which transcends the limitations of time." In this century, scientific discoveries have made far-reaching changes in the material life of the people. This is equally true in politics also. Despite these stupendous changes nearly ninety-five per cent of Tiruvaḷḷuvar's ideas are applicable to the present-day world.

Pāratīyār, the twentieth century poet, paid a tribute to *Tirukkural* saying "The Tamil country gained fame by offering Tiruvaḷḷuvar (meaning his work) to the world."<sup>26</sup> What is the reason for *Tirukkural*'s universal appeal? Its message is not only for the Tamils and the Tamil country but for the entire humanity. Tiruvaḷḷuvar neither mentioned his religion and caste, nor his place of birth and language in any of the 1330 *kuraḷs*. Tiruvaḷḷuvar, like Mahatma Gandhi, transcended the narrow limits of country, language and religion and wrote a book of universal appeal several centuries ago.

Tiruvaḷḷuvar has not emphasised his ideas about a particular religion or ritual. He has pointed out, however, only the basic rules and the rest has been left to the reader's analytical perception. He believed that none of the views should be accepted blindly. According to him the ultimate end of "Wisdom lies in discerning the core of truth received from whichever source."<sup>27</sup> He scorns the habit of leading a blind life and gives importance to the spirit of enquiry. While discussing the life of renunciation, he gives importance not to outward symbols like ochre cloth, matted hair, and water-jug but to a detached mind. His progressive views are seen while criticising the pseudo-hermits and their rituals. Though he had seen the observance of many rituals, around him, Tiruvaḷḷuvar did not mention any one of them in his work. Since he knew that those rituals were bound to change from time to time and from place to place, he mentioned only those qualities and actions which are the basic requisites for human life.

Tiruvaḷḷuvar's counsel to the ruler of a country, is applicable both to the ruler and his subjects. This is a special feature of the *Tirukkural*. The contents of some of the chapters like "Learning", (Ch.40) "Listening to the Learned" (Ch.42), "Possession of Wisdom" (Ch.43), "Apprehending the Opportune Moment" (Ch.49) "Choosing the Appropriate Place" (Ch.50); "Assessing the Strength of Foes" (Ch.48), "Possession of Powerful Will" (Ch.60), "Avoidance of Sloth" (Ch.61), "Persistent Striving"

(Ch.62), "Avoidance of Succumbing to Adversity" (Ch.63), "Eloquence" (Ch.65); "Purity in Action" (Ch.66), "Executive Ability" (Ch.67), "Effective Modes of Execution" (Ch.68), "Ways of Amassing Wealth" (Ch.76), "Friendship" (Ch.79), "Hostility" (Ch.86), "Avoidance of Offending the Great" (Ch.90), "Wanton Women" (Ch.92), "Abstaining from Liquor" (Ch.93), "Gamboling" (Ch.94) "Medicine" (Ch.95), "Self-respect or Sense of Honour" (Ch.97), "Perfect Goodness" (Ch.99), "Agriculture" (Ch.104) and "Dread of Mendicancy" (Ch.107)\* are applicable to all subjects. Since every subject happens to hold some responsibility as the head of a family, a business concern, or bureaucracy, the rules laid down for the ruler are equally applicable to the subjects.

The *Tirukkural* perspicuously points out the importance of wealth for the mundane life. "This world is not for men without wealth; likewise heaven is not for men without compassion."<sup>28</sup> To illustrate a truth, he has a simile which invariably brings out yet another universal truth. In many *kural*s, to sharpen the readers' intellect, Tiruvalluvar would raise a query. The following *kural* is a typical example to illustrate this point.

What is it that one lacks if one's wife is virtuous?  
What is it that one has if one's wife is devoid of virtue?<sup>29</sup>

In same *kural*s he has employed the dramatic technique to convey the truth, through one of the dramatic personages. In the first part there are very few *kural*s in which the dramatic techniques are employed. In the second part this technique is used in some chapters. The entire third part Kāmatuppāl or Love, is like a stage play.

### *Imaginative Love*

One who sees a lady in a beautiful natural environment is captivated by her alluring beauty and falls in love. His words betray that he is under her magic spell. "Is she an angel or a rare pea-hen or a bejewelled lady? My mind is perplexed."<sup>30</sup> After some time they become lovers and their relationship assumes a special meaning. This is clear when he says, "The relationship between the body and the soul is the same as the love between me and this damsel."<sup>31</sup> Further he adds, "She is the life of my life; to be separated from her is equal to death."<sup>32</sup>

\* Most of the chapter headings are based on K.M. Balasubramaniam's English translation of the *Tirukkural*.

The third section of *Tirukkural* contains many *kurals* which have words of fertile imagination. This is reflected in the words spoken by the lady. "My lover is in my eyes. He never departs from them. Even if I wink he would not suffer from pain. He is so ethereal in form."<sup>33</sup> "As my lover abides in my eyes, I do not apply the eye-liner\* to the eyelids. If I do, I fear the eye-liner would cover him up."<sup>34</sup> "As my lover abides in my heart, I refrain from eating anything hot, lest it should hurt him."<sup>35</sup> Slowly their secret love is known to others. Many hear about it. When the lady's mother learns about the love affair she chides her daughter. What then is the reaction of the love-lorn lady? "The scandalous words spoken by the folk act as manure; while the rebukes of my mother act as water to nurture my love."<sup>36</sup> "They think, they could extinguish my love by their scandalous talk. How mistaken are they? This is like extinguishing fire with ghee."<sup>37</sup>

In another context, the lover plans to leave for a foreign country on an important mission. He reveals the plan to his lady love. On hearing it she replies in the following manner. "If you don't want to leave me alone, then tell me about it. If you want to tell me about your quick return, then you don't tell me now. But tell it to those who would be alive on your return."<sup>38</sup> In a soliloquy she speaks her thoughts: "If he should be so cruel as to bid me farewell, it is difficult to expect that he would come back and bestow his love."<sup>39</sup> Her utterances and her sufferings after the departure of her lover are bound to melt the hearts of readers. "Why am I now living? To remember and pine for the happy days I have spent with him as wife."<sup>40</sup> "What would happen if I were to forget those merry days? I cannot forget them. Even if think of those pleasurable days my heart burns."<sup>41</sup> "In the live-long day he never comes to shower his love: but I behold him in my dreams. My life still lingers because of these pleasant dreams."<sup>42</sup> "How splendid it would be if there is no such thing as wakefulness? Then in my dreams he would not depart from me."<sup>43</sup> "What good have I done to the morning? Or what evil have I done to the evening as to change their natural form?"<sup>44</sup> When my beloved was with me I never knew that evening could arouse the grief of separation."<sup>45</sup> "My malady is like a tiny bud in dawn; grows slowly all

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\* While applying the eye-liner the lady would not be able to behold her lover for a few seconds. This she does not want to happen.

day long and blossoms at evening."<sup>46</sup> "Oh my soul! you are going in search of my beloved. While going take my eyes also with you. Otherwise they would eat me up as they are dying to see him."<sup>47</sup>

Thus in the entire *Kāmatuppāl*, Tiruvaḷḷuvar keeps himself in the background and allows his characters to speak in a dramatic monologue. While reading this section we feel as if we have been witnessing on stage the drama of human love enacted with emotion and imagination. These emotions and imaginations acquire beautiful form and expression.

Tiruvaḷḷuvar's main aim in the first section, *Arattuppāl*, is to impress deeply on the reader's mind the value of virtue. With poise and clarity of a man of moral rectitude he explains what he has realised as truth. While doing so, little room is given either to personal feelings or imagination. In the second section *Poruṭpāl*, he is revealed as an intellectual with rich practical experience of mundane life. What all he has seen and heard in various walks of life, he has analysed and presented in a classical form. The third section *Kāmatuppāl*, reveals his artistic mind. He appears not as an adviser, or a debator or an intellectual but as a creative poet. He has composed these *kural venpās* as an eminent creative poet.

### *Virtue and Culture*

Tiruvaḷḷuvar emphasises the value of virtue even while discussing the science of politics. He attaches equal importance to the means and the ends in gaining victory on the battlefield or in amassing wealth. While discussing the kingly excellence, he gives importance to the 'Purity in Action' or *Vinaittūymai* (Ch.66). "Avoid all deeds which do not yield fame and benefit."<sup>48</sup> "Men of infallible judgement, though threatened with peril will not engage in acts which would bring them disgrace."<sup>49</sup> "Even when one sees one's mother starving, in providing her relief one should shun all acts reproved by men of virtue."<sup>50</sup> "Wealth gained at the cost of others' tears, will vanish leaving the possessor in tears. But if one loses the wealth earned by fair means, it will be later restored to him."<sup>51</sup> "Wealth obtained through foul means, and preserved will be like water preserved in an unbaked clay pot."<sup>52</sup>

It is difficult to expect from Tiruvaḷḷuvar, who emphasises the basic value of virtue in all aspects of life, to speak of lust and its demands while discussing human love. All that he says in the third section reveals the character's noble and virtuous mind. He not



only speaks of the basic physical pleasures but also points out that physical beauty is the basis on which the nobler aspect of love takes root. As a result Tiruvaḷḷuvar's love poems are the treasure house of culture. Since there is nobility and purity in them, Bhakti poets of the succeeding centuries like Nammālvār, adopted them in their compositions without any modification.

To cite an example, the following love poem from *Kāmatuppāl* has been adopted by Nammālvār while discussing his boundless love for Lord Kaṇṇaṇ in *Tiruvāimoli*.

*kural:*

“Manured so much and matured by the scandals of this town  
And water'd by my mother's frown my love disease hath grown.”<sup>53</sup>  
Tiruvaimoli :

Kannan the blue-hued  
Oh maid!  
Stubbornly sowed the seed of love  
In the field of my heart  
Manured by the scandals of the town  
And watered by my mother's frown  
Like ocean that love hath grown <sup>54</sup>

In the third section, Tiruvaḷḷuvar wanted to portray only the noble aspects of human love. This view is strengthened if one considers the love poems of the *Caṅkam* classics. While treating the theme of human love, prime place is given in the *Caṅkam* literature to “feigned reserve of manner”, or *ūṭal* as a special aspect of human love significant in agricultural regions. Here the heroine would assume a false reserve on learning her lover's affair with a concubine. When he returns from the concubine's house he will not be received by his lady-love but he will only witness her disgust and anger. Realising her uncompromising mood he will subside. There are very few love poems of *marutam* region which do not narrate the hero's illicit relationship with a concubine, who is in fact an adept in dance, music and aesthetics. Though Tiruvaḷḷuvar departed from this tradition, he did introduce “feigned reserve of manner” without the paramour while treating human love in the third section. This departure is in keeping with the noble standard he has laid down in the second section, *Poruṭpāl* or Wealth. There he despises the triple evils of “Wanton Women” (Ch.92), “Abstaining from Liquor” (Ch.93), and “Gambling” (Ch.94). There-



fore, the absence of the paramour in the chapter that deals with the "Felicity of Feigned Reserve" or *Uṭaluvakai* (Ch.133). There are many *kuraḷs* to prove this view: "My beloved is free from faults. Nevertheless there is some usefulness in showing feigned reserve, for it could extract even greater love from him."<sup>55</sup> To the woman characters in *kuraḷ* even feigned reserve or anger is an imaginative fun. Since her lover happens to possess a beautiful personality it is but natural for other women to appreciate his physical beauty. She is unable to bear this. With a simulated anger she says "The eyes of women have enjoyed the beauty of your chest. Therefore you are given to promiscuity. I will not embrace you."<sup>56</sup> It is a custom even in Tamil Nadu to wish a person a hundred years of life if he sneezes, so that evil should not befall him. This custom which must have been prevalent during Tiruvalluvar's time is effectively employed in one of the *kuraḷs* which deals with "The Finesse of Feigned Anger". (Ch.132) "He sneezed purposely when we continued to be sulky and silent. Why did he sneeze? He used it as a device to break my silence, for if he sneezed it's my duty to wish him a long life."<sup>57</sup> In another *kuraḷ* sneezing is employed to reveal another belief that obtains among the Tamils. She blessed her lover when he sneezed. Immediately a thought flashed into her mind and she started crying. "Someone remembers you and therefore you sneezed. Tell me the lady who remembers you?"<sup>58</sup> (It is a belief among the Tamil that if someone remembers, the person thus remembered starts sneezing.) Yet in another *kuraḷ* sneezing is used to provoke the feigned anger. The hero had a sensation of sneezing. To prevent his beloved from crying, he tried to suppress it. Even then she started crying. "You try to suppress the sneezing, because I should not know that someone remembers you now."<sup>59</sup> On another occasion the hero adorns himself with a new kind of flower. She gets angry and says, "To which lady are you going to parade your beauty by adorning these flowers."<sup>60</sup> Yet on another occasion, the hero steeped in deep thought looks at her. She in feigned anger, asks "in thought of which person do you thus look at me?"<sup>61</sup> Tiruvalluvar is able to portray the feigned anger of the heroine, without describing the hero's illicit affairs with a paramour, which is undoubtedly a departure from the literary tradition of the *Caṅkam* age. This shows in unmistakable terms Tiruvalluvar's revolutionary conception of feigned anger as well as his purity of mind.

### New Outlook

Drinking liquor was a common practice among the people of the *Caṅkam* period. The *Caṅkam* literature mentions that it was a customary habit found in royal palaces and poets' homes. It was prevalent in montane regions and agricultural tracts. Nowhere in the entire body of *Caṅkam* literature drinking is condemned as an evil whereas Tiruvaḷḷuvar highlights the evils of drinking. He detests the idea of paralysing the mind with purchased liquor.

In the *Caṅkam* literature portraits are found not only of those living in abject poverty but of those rolling in money. It was those rich people who patronised the poets and helped the poor. As a result the munificent patrons were praised in the *Caṅkam* literature. But Tiruvaḷḷuvar revolutionises the very concept of rich and poor, when he points out the evils of poverty and condemns the habit of begging. "The misery of poverty brings in its train many sorrows".<sup>62</sup> "The words of the poor go in vain, although they may be pregnant in thought and profound in expression",<sup>63</sup> "He who is reduced to poverty will be regarded as a stranger even by his own mother"<sup>64</sup> After harping on the evils of poverty, Tiruvaḷḷuvar portrays the experiences of the poor thus: "One may sleep safely amidst the flame of fire but by no means in the midst of poverty"<sup>65</sup> "Will poverty that threatened to kill me yesterday visit me today too?"<sup>66</sup> What Tiruvaḷḷuvar emphasises in the chapters on "Poverty" (Ch.105) and on the "Dread of Begging" (Ch.107) is that one should live a life free from entreating others for alms. This noble idea finds a clear expression in the following *kuṛaḷ*. "There is nothing more disgraceful to one's tongue than to use it in begging for a draught of water even for a cow."<sup>67</sup> When he condemns the evil of begging in his *kuṛaḷ*. Tiruvaḷḷuvar reflects the strong feelings of those in the grip of grinding poverty. One such strong feeling comes out in the following *kuṛaḷ*. "If the creator of the world has so ordained that some must subsist on alms alone may He too go a-begging and perish."<sup>68</sup> The foregoing *kuṛaḷ*s convey revolutionary ideas with deep emotion.

Tiruvaḷḷuvar gives equal importance in his work to those who lead a family life and to those who renounce it. His views on leading a family life are brought out explicitly in the following *kuṛaḷ*s. "Among those who strive for salvation, he who leads a family life is the best."<sup>69</sup> "The one who leads an ideal householder's

life in this world will be placed as one among the heavenly gods.”<sup>70</sup>

He extols those who renounce the world in the following manner: “Those who renounce all wordly things are eminent men, for they achieve salvation. Others are caught up in the delusive attractions of the world.”<sup>71</sup> Tiruvaḷḷuvar denounces in no uncertain terms the stealthy conduct of those who feign to have renounced worldly pleasures in the following *kuraḷs*. “The one who sins beneath the mask of saintly robes is like the fowler who hides himself in thickets and nets the birds”.<sup>72</sup> “What avails an appearance of sanctity as high as heaven, if the mind indulges in conscious sin.”<sup>73</sup> An in-depth study of the section on “Virtue” will reveal that enlightenment is achieved in various stages of life: the soul attains culture in family life; achieves poise in renunciation; and gains realisation by understanding its true self. Thus the family life and the ascetic life are blended together in *Tirukkuraḷ*. The family life which commences by living with a lovable wife, bringing up children, serving guests and extending benevolence to others in fact has its basis in love, and achieves its consummation in compassion. Therefore Tiruvaḷḷuvar says “compassion is but a child born to the mother called love.”<sup>74</sup>

In some places while pointing out the truths Tiruvaḷḷuvar mentions that they were the result of the clarity he attained by the study of several books. This is evident in the following *kuraḷ*: “The quintessence of all the codes of law is but to share one’s bread with all beings and protect them.”<sup>75</sup> In some other places the truths are the result of his own analysis of worldly life. This comes out conspicuously in the following *kuraḷs*: “Among all blessings that one may acquire, we know no greater gift than the acquisition of intelligent children”.<sup>76</sup> “Amidst all that we have described as real virtue, there is nothing so good as truthfulness.”<sup>77</sup> “The unscrupulous ones are like good persons in their outward form; we have not seen anywhere such a true likeness.”<sup>78</sup> Some of the above mentioned *kuraḷs* reveal the author’s erudite scholarship as well as his experience in life. Tiruvaḷḷuvar might have seen only some parts of India because of dearth of travel facilities in his days. But his soul embraced the entire universe. Some of the lines like “*vaḷivaḷaṅkum mallal māñālam*” (the fertile universe where air pervades), *māyiru nālam* (large universe), indicate that Tiruvaḷḷuvar’s mind took in the entire universe.

### *Nālaṭiyār*

*Nālaṭiyār* is another important ethical work. Composed as it is in four lines, and in *veṇpā* metre the work contains four hundred quatrains. There is a proverb in Tamil, highlighting the number of lines in which *Tirukkuraḷ* and *Nālaṭiyār* are composed. The proverb runs like this: As the sticks of banyan and pipal trees strengthen the teeth, so the couplet (*Tirukkuraḷ*) and the quatrain (*Nālaṭiyār*) deepen knowledge.

Different poets have composed the poems in *Nālaṭiyār*. There is a story which indicates how the poems have been written. Once upon a time in the mountain tracts of the Tamil country lived eight thousand Jain ascetics. When there was famine they migrated to Madurai, the capital of the Pāṇḍya rulers. There they enjoyed the patronage of the Pāṇḍya king. At the same time they were engaged in Tamil research. After a few years they learned that there was no famine in their place. Therefore they expressed their desire to the king to return. But the Pāṇḍya king was unwilling to give his assent. Nevertheless they left Madurai on a particular night without the knowledge of the king. Before leaving, all the eight thousand ascetics wrote one poem each in *veṇpā* metre and left it in their abodes. On the following morning when the king learnt about the departure of the Jain ascetics, he felt sad. He then ordered the palm leaves on which the poems were written to be thrown into the river. Of the eight thousand palm leaves, only four hundred of them sailed against the current of the river. The king collected only those four hundred leaves and edited them with the title *Nālaṭiyār*.

Apart from giving us a glimpse of *Nālaṭiyār*'s origin, the story reveals certain facts which corroborate with the internal evidence of the book. Since the work extols the ascetic way of life and harps on the transitory nature of life, it should have been written by Jain monks. As the poems are composed in four lines and in *veṇpā* metre, the work as a whole is named *Nālaṭiyār*. Though many poems were written originally, only those that survived the ravages of time were collected and redacted in its present form.

The work was later edited on the pattern of *Tirukkuraḷ* by the poet Patumaṇār. As a result the *Nālaṭiyār* too has three sections entitled Virtue, Wealth and Love; and each section has several chapters. Like *Tirukkuraḷ*, *Nālaṭiyār* too captivated the mind of

G.U. Pope, a missionary from England. He translated the entire work into English.

The merit of the work lies in giving portraits with a literary flavour even on such abstruse subjects like the impermanence of life. The following poem describes the transient nature of wealth. "Even the rich people, who had rejected and selected the best of delicacies served by their wives might go begging for gruel. Therefore never think that wealth is a permanent one."<sup>79</sup> "Even those proud commanders, who rode on elephant's back with parasol held over their heads might lose due to misfortune everything including status and become with their wives captives of their enemies. Therefore status is not a lasting thing in life."<sup>80</sup> "The orchard loses its glamour once the fruit-gathering season is over. Likewise youth loses all its elegance with the passage of time. Do not be taken up by her sharp spear-shaped bewitching eyes. Her alluring beauty and youth will give way to old age. Bent down with age and indifferent sight, she will guide herself with a stick."<sup>81</sup> Therefore youth is also transient. The poems of *Nālaṭiyār* which bring out before mind's eye the impermanence of wealth, position and youth, also emphasise one's duty in mundane life. "Those who extract sugar from the sugar-cane by a process of pressing, boiling, care little for the leavings when it is burnt in the kiln. Likewise those who have enjoyed the good benefits accrued from the efforts of the ephemeral human body care nothing when death (or the god of death) approaches."<sup>82</sup> With this beautiful simile, an eternal truth is presented in *Nālaṭiyār*.

### Other Ethical Works

Other ethical works like *Nāṇmaṇikkāṭikai*, *Cirupaṇcamūlam* and *Tirikaṭukam* contain one hundred verses each. Another ethical work, *Ēlāti*, has eighty poems. Others like *Inṇiyavai Nārpatu* and *Inṇā Nārpatu*, as the very names indicate, contain forty poems each.

Like *Nālaṭiyār*, another ethical work, the *Paḷamoli Nānūru* has four hundred poems. Each one of the poems has a proverb relevant to the ethics discussed. The proverb invariably appears towards the end of the poem. Therefore from this work we learn not only the rules of conduct but the proverbs that were in currency during the period when the work was written.

The *Ācārakkōvai* is another ethical work which gives emphasis



to the moral codes that were in vogue during its period of composition. *Mutumolikkāñci* brings out in short forceful lines, many pithy moral sayings. In forty-five poems, the *Inñilai* explains many ethical principles.

Other works like *Kārnārpātu*, *Tiṇaimoli Aimpātu*, *Tiṇaimālai Nūṛṇainmpātu* and *Aintiṇai Elupātu* discuss the theme of human love. Another work, *Kainñilai* also belongs to this category. Most of the poems in these works are similar to the *akam* poems in the *Caṅkam* classics, although there is little novelty in them. A great number of them are hyperbolic in handling the love theme. Unlike the love poems in *Caṅkam* literature which are composed in *akaval*, *kalippā* and *paripāṭal* metres, these love poems of later period are in *venpā* metre.

The *Kaḷavaḷi Nārptu* describes the battle between the Cēra and the Cōḷa kings waged at Kaḷumalam in the Tamil country. The Cēra king lost the battle and was kept as a prisoner. Tradition avers that to obtain the Cēra king's release, his court poet seems to have written this poetical work. All the forty poems in the work exclusively describe the battlefield and the victory won by the Cōḷa king.

At a period when *Patiṇenṅilkkanaṅku* or the eighteen minor works were in the process of composition the Jain and Buddhist scholars were engaged in literary and religious activities. The abodes of the Jain and the Buddhist monks are known as *paḷḷikal*. Since these *paḷḷikal* happened to be the centres of learning, even now the Tamil terminology *paḷḷi* refers to educational institutions. The Jain monks wrote many literary and grammatical works in Tamil. One of the Jain monks, Vaccirananti, was responsible for establishing a Tamil literary academy or *Caṅkam* during this period and this academy did much to promote the growth of Tamil language and literature. Many of the monks belonging to this academy wrote works of literary merit. Scholars believe that it was only during this period that such literary works as *Nāḷaiyār* were written. Nakkīrar, the commentator of the *Iṛaiyanār Kaḷaviyal*, who was well informed about the Jain academy, made up an imaginative story about the existence of three Tamil *Caṅkam* prior to this and declared that works like *Akattiyam*, *Tolkāppiyam*, *Eṭṭuttokai* and *Pattuppāṭṭu* would have been written during the period of the *Caṅkams*.

The epic *Takaṭūr Yāttirai* is on the theme of war. There are

evidences to show that this work belongs to the *Caṅkam* period. However some scholars claim that it is a later work, though it narrates an incident of the *Caṅkam* classics. Takaṭūr was the capital of Atiyamān, a chieftain much praised in the *Caṅkam* classics. He was defeated by a Cēra king, whose victory is narrated in *Takaṭūr Yāttirai*. It is also known as *Takaṭūr Mālai*. It is a poetical work with a commingling of prose passages. Only forty-four poems are now available and their style is analogous to that of the *Caṅkam* poems. Heroism is the outstanding theme of the poems in *Takaṭūr Yāttirai*.

### *Muttoḷḷāyiram*

*Muttoḷḷāyiram* is a panegyric, of nine hundred quatrains in praise of the Cēra, the Cōḷa and the Pāṇḍya kings of the Tamil country. Love and heroism are the two main emotions that predominate the poems. Of the nine hundred poems as the title of the work suggests, only one hundred and eight quatrains are now in existence. Nowhere in the book the names of the individual kings are mentioned, although their dynasty names are clearly indicated. Therefore the work eulogizes in general terms the Cēra, the Cōḷa and the Pāṇḍya kings. Their heroism and the importance of elephant corps in their armies are praised in the work. Some of the poems in *Muttoḷḷāyiram* speak of women's love for the kings. No reference to the author of the work is found. However the poems express deep feelings in a gripping manner. Some of the poems are highly imaginative in describing the anxiety of lovelorn women. This is evident from the summary of a poem in *Muttoḷḷāyiram*. "The harbour city of the Pāṇḍya kings, Korḱai is not the only place where shining pearls are born from oysters. It could be born from the eyes of women who pine for the sandal paste-smeared chest of the Pāṇḍya king." The tears of the women languishing for the Pāṇḍya king's love and sympathy are compared by the poet to pearls.

Brilliant pearls are born  
Not in Korḱai alone  
They do appear  
From the eyes of women  
Smeared with chill sandal paste.<sup>83</sup>

When the poet wants to describe the Pāṇḍyan's valour, with an imaginative touch he says, his enemies shudder to think of him

even in their dreams. "Thunder will frighten away the hooded-cobra to its hole. Likewise the Pāṇḍya king's enemies even if they dream about the much dreaded lance, they will hide themselves." Since they fear the Pāṇḍya king so much, they close their forts expecting the arrival of his army. They keep their elephant corps, cavalry, chariots in battle readiness. Then comes the Pāṇḍya's birthday, which incidentally means a day free from battles. To praise the Pāṇḍya on his birthday the poet addresses his enemies in a lighter vein. "Oh enemies of the Pāṇḍya king! Open the gates of your forts; disband the elephants, chariots and cavalry. Do not fear for the Pāṇḍya today. He will not fight today, for it is the day of Uttirāṭam his birth-star." It is a panegyric, in which the poet acclaims Pāṇḍya's valour and declaims against his enemies. At the same time he mentions that on Pāṇḍya's birthday alone, the enemies can live in peace.

Open the gates of the forts  
Disband the elephants, chariots and cavalry,  
Fear not Tennai's (Pāṇḍya) enemies  
Tennai decked in wreath  
Won't mount an attack  
For it is his birthday (Uttirāṭam).<sup>84</sup>

### NOTES

1. Tiruvāṇḍakamani K.M. Balasubramaniam (trans.), *Tirukkural of Tiruvalluvar: Tamil Text and English Translation with Notes and Comments*, (Madras, 1962), Chapter 98, Kural 2, p. 199. Hereafter references to Chapter and Kural will be simply mentioned as for instance 98: 2, p. 199).
2. 27: 1, p. 55
3. 4: 4, p. 9.
4. Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development* (London, 1951), p. 203.
5. 21: 4, p. 43. Tiruvāṇḍakamani's translation of the *Kural* is quoted.
6. 66: 6, p. 135.
7. 23: 2, p. 47.
8. 19: 3, p. 39.
9. 22: 10, p. 45.
10. 12: 3, p. 25.
11. 21: 9, p. 25
12. 21: 5, p. 43.

13. 29: 2, p. 59.
14. 32: 2, p. 65.
15. 35 7, p. 67.
16. 11: 9, p. 23.
17. 25: 10, p. 51.
18. 40: 1, p. 83.
19. 41: 8, p. 85.
20. 43: 2, p. 89.
21. 55: 4, p. 113.
22. 55: 6, p. 113.
23. 56: 2, p. 115.
24. 56: 8, p. 115.
25. 56: 5, p. 115.
26. Pāratīyār, *Pāratīyār Pāṭalkaḷ*
27. 43: 3, p. 89.
28. 25: 7, p. 51.
29. 6: 3, p. 13.
30. 109: 1, p. 223.
31. 113: 2, p. 231.
32. 113: 4, p. 231.
33. 113: 6, p. 231.
34. 113: 7, p. 231.
35. 113: 8, p. 231.
36. 115: 7, p. 235.
37. 115: 8, p. 235.
38. 116: 1, p. 237.
39. 116: 6, p. 237.
40. 121: 6, p. 247.
41. 121: 7, p. 247.
42. 122: 3, p. 249.
43. 122: 6, p. 249.
44. 123: 5, p. 251.
45. 123: 6, p. 251.
46. 123: 7, p. 251.
47. 125: 4, p. 255.
48. 66: 2, p. 135.
49. 66: 4, p. 135.
50. 66: 6, p. 135.
51. 66: 9, p. 135.
52. 66: 10, p. 135.
53. 115: 7 p. 235. Tiruvachakamani's translation of the *Kuraḷ* is quoted.
54. Mayilai Madhavadasan (ed.), *Nālāyira Tivviyap-prapantam* Revised edn. (Madras, 1962), pm. 3142, p. 639.

55. 133: 1, p. 271.
56. 132: 1, p. 269.
57. 132: 2, p. 269.
58. 132: 7, p. 269.
59. 132: 8, p. 269.
60. 132: 3, p. 269.
61. 132: 10, p. 269.
62. 105: 5, p. 213.
63. 105: 6, p. 213.
64. 105: 7, p. 213.
65. 105: 9, p. 213.
66. 105: 8, p. 213.
67. 107: 6, p. 217.
68. 107: 2, p. 217.
69. 5: 7, p. 11.
70. 5: 10, p. 11.
71. 35: 8, p. 71.
72. 28: 4, p. 57.
73. 28: 2, p. 57.
74. 76: 7, p. 155.
75. 33: 2, p. 67.
76. 7: 1, p. 15.
77. 33: 10, p. 61.
78. 108: 1, p. 219.
79. T.S. Palacuntaram Pillai (ed.), *Nalatiyar*, Revised edn (Madras, 1972),  
pm 1, p. 3
80. *Ibid.*, pm. 3, p. 4
81. *Ibid.*, pm. 17, p. 16
82. *Ibid.*, pm. 35, p. 31
83. N. Cēturakunāṭaṇ (ed.), *Muttollāyiram*, Revised edn (Madras, 1958),  
pm 46, p. 90.
84. *Ibid.*, pm. 7, p. 12.



## The Twin Epics (100–500 A.D.)

There is no evidence to cite that epics as a genre were written first in Tamil literature. The earliest body of literature came to us in the form of unitary poems. They are of varying lengths from 3 to 782 lines, collected and redacted and handed over to posterity with the nomenclature *Caṅkam* literature. The origin of Tamil literature itself had to be traced from these poems whose themes and rhymes are largely based on folk songs. One can postulate that during that historical past many folk stories might have been prevalent among the people. Evidence for the staging of dramas is now available. The grammatical treatise, *Tolkāppiyam*, while discussing outward human emotive expressions, refers to the dramatic art. References concerning dramatic artist like *viṛaliyar*, *kūttar* and *porunar* are found in the *Caṅkam* literature. There should have been in existence stories based on dramas as well as independent stories in the country. But these stories failed to grow into epic proportion, possibly due to the negligence of scholars to preserve them.

After the *Caṅkam* period, however, Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ, the author of *Cilappatikāram* came forward to write an epic. He belonged to the royal family of the Cēra country. An astrologer predicted that Iḷaṅkō despite being the second son in the family, would succeed his father to the throne. On hearing this and noticing the change in his elder brother's face, Iḷaṅkō then and there renounced all

mundane ties and became a monk so that he would not remain even as a remote claimant to the throne. He maintained this detached attitude to worldly things in his life and this is reflected in his epic also. Though belonging to the Cēra royal family, he gave equal importance, due respect and honoured place to the Pāṇḍya and the Cōla kings in the epic. He described the cities and rivers of the Pāṇḍya and the Cōla countries, with the same fervour he described those of the Cēra country. It is important to mention these things here because in the historical past, the Tamil speaking area was not a single political unit, but divided into three separate countries and ruled by three different dynasty of kings. Therefore the bards who praise one kingdom would not praise the other. This practice obtained during the *Caṅkam* period. The poems written during this age failed to project the view that the three different territories comprised the Tamil country. The only exceptional work being *Tolkāppiyam*, where in its preface the Tamil speaking region was referred to as Tamil Nadu. However this spirit was not reflected either in *Puraṇānūru* or *Patirrupattu*. The enmity among the three Tamil kings and the wars they waged are mentioned in these works. There are very few accounts of the happy meetings of the three Tamil kings. Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ made a welcome departure from this tradition; revived the truth that the people of the three different dynasties were in fact Tamils; and gave equal importance in his work to the territories belonging to the three Tamil kings. The story of *Cilappatikāram* also provided the author with this unique opportunity to transcend the dynastic divisions and view the three political units as one country. Kaṇṇaki, the heroine of the epic was born in the Cōla country, suffered humiliations in the Pāṇḍya country and finally attained godhood and fame in the Cēra country. As a result the author had the scope, which he utilised to applaud the three kingdoms and their kings.

### *The Story of Cilappatikāram*

Kōvalaṇ the hero of the epic, was born in a rich merchant family living at Kāvirippūmpaṭṭiṇam, the capital of the Cōla country. In the same city, in an equally noble family of merchants, Kaṇṇaki the heroine, was born. With the consent of both the families Kōvalaṇ married Kaṇṇaki and lead a happy family life till he attended Mātavi's inaugural dance performance, held at the same city. She came from a family of prostitutes and was an adept

in music and dance. Attracted by her artistic talents and captivated by her youthful charms, Kōvalaṇ fell in love with her. Infatuated with Mātavi, Kōvalaṇ came to live with her, deserting his lawful wife and neglecting his business. As a result he lost his wealth, and began to bemoan his lot. On a festival day at the seashore Kōvalaṇ agreed to play on the *yāl* musical instrument first. His song, although, belied his internal struggle was on the theme of love and its various manifestations. Mātavi without realising his agonising mental struggle, made playful repartee by subtly indicating her false love for an imaginative hero. Suspecting her moral integrity Kōvalaṇ parted from her. He went to Kaṇṇaki's home. She received him as usual with love and affection. She learnt of his distress and offered her priceless anklet so that it could be sold and a new business started. They proceeded to Madurai, not only to sell the anklet but begin their life anew. On reaching Madurai, Kōvalaṇ showed the anklet to a goldsmith, who happened to be the royal jeweller, for appraisal. The jeweller, who had stolen the queen's anklet before was searching for a replacement, considered Kaṇṇaki's anklet a suitable one. He therefore informed Kōvalaṇ that the anklet was worthy to be worn only by the Pāṇḍya queen and as such he expressed the wish that the anklet should be shown to the king first for possible purchase. He requested Kōvalaṇ to remain in his house till his return. At the palace he informed the king that he had found the anklet and that the thief who had stolen the queen's anklet was in his house. The king who was then hurriedly proceeding to the queen's chamber to pacify her, without going into the allegations, arbitrarily ordered his guards to kill the thief and fetch the anklet. The guards implicitly carried out the king's orders. When Kaṇṇaki heard the circumstances under which her husband was killed, she proceeded furiously to the king's court, argued her case and proved her husband's innocence beyond doubt by breaking her anklet in the king's possession, which contained red-stones whereas the queen's anklet contained only pearls. When the king realised the grievous mistake, he dropped down dead from the throne. His wife too died on the spot. Despite the death of the Pāṇḍya king and the queen, Kaṇṇaki's fury did not subside. She cursed that Madurai should go up in flames. The city was consumed by fire. Her uncontrollable fury too subsided and she became the personification of sorrow. She walked along, till she reached the foot of a *vēṅkai* tree on hilltop in the Cēra country. After

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remaining there in solitude for fourteen days, Kaṇṇaki reached heaven.

The story, in short, formed the theme for the epic *Cilappatikāram*. It is one of the best epics in Tamil with a mine of literary wealth. Although Iḷaṅkō was a monk, he was adept in fine arts. He gave beautiful word-pictures of the many events that occurred in the lives of the characters. Both the tragic and the heroic emotions predominate the epic. In many places dramatic effect comes to the fore, especially in conversations among characters. Even the folk songs of hunters, shepherds and people living in hilly regions give dramatic effect to the epic in many places. As a result of these features, the epic is regarded as a class by itself and it is often called a 'dramatic epic'.

### Folk Songs

None of the poets who lived before Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ ever attempted to give a written form to folk songs. Even from the *Caṅkam* literature one cannot learn anything about folk songs, or music or dance. For certain unknown reasons the poets of the *Caṅkam* period neglected them. Iḷaṅkō on the other hand respected the artistic merit in folk arts. He also comprehended the throbbing of life in those art forms. Whenever he had an opportunity, Iḷaṅkō gave a written form to those folk motifs in the epic. The love songs of fishermen, the songs in praise of the river Kāvēri, the hunter's ritual music to goddess Kali, the dance music of the shepherdesses, the devotional songs of Tirumāl and Murukaṇ, the songs sung by women while playing *ammāṇai* in the Cēra country, the rice-pounding songs, songs sung while rocking the swing, the songs in eulogy of kings, were utilised in the epic in the same form in which they were sung in olden days, by people of different regions. It is only through *Cilappatikāram* we can know about the form in which folk songs were sung in the historical past.

### Genesis of the Epic

The Cēra king Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṇ accompanied by his wife proceeded to Ceṅkuṇṇu, adjacent to the banks of river Pēriyāru, to see the scenic beauty of the hilly regions. Iḷaṅkō and his friend, poet Cāttanār, also accompanied them. Everyone of them enjoyed the natural beauty of the mountainous region. They also witnessed the

dances and enjoyed the music of the mountain folks. The people of the montane region, who came to honour the king and queen, after presenting precious things, narrated an unusual scene they had witnessed. They said, "a few weeks ago a lady with one breast came and stood under the *Vēṅkai* tree. She was a picture of grief. We did not know anything about her. When we approached and asked her who she was, she remained under the tree without food or water and then reached heaven."<sup>1</sup> The king, the queen and their retinue were surprised at the story. Whereupon the poet Cāttanār told the king "I know what had happened to the lady. She lost her husband at Madurai, where he was falsely accused of stealing the queen's anklet by the court jeweller. On the king's orders his guards killed him for the uncommitted theft. On hearing her husband's fate, Kaṇṇaki proceeded to the king's court, proved her husband's innocence as well as the king's misplaced judgement. When the Pāṇḍya king realised his mistake, he was shocked, collapsed on the throne and died. Instantaneously his wife too died. Despite the death of the king and the queen, the fury of Kaṇṇaki did not subside. Kaṇṇaki pronounced a curse 'if it is true that I am a chaste woman, I will destroy this Pāṇḍya kingdom and the city of Madurai'. She tore off one of her breasts and threw it on Madurai. The city was burnt down. With that Kaṇṇaki's anger too subsided. Thereafter, she did not return to her homeland, the Cōla country, but came to the mountain, which lies in your territory. She came here, as if to inform Pāṇḍya's cruelty to you."<sup>2</sup> When Cāttanār concluded Kaṇṇaki's story, the Cēra king felt very sad and said, "Before I could hear the tragic news, the Pāṇḍya king had died. His death reveals his greatness and helps to rectify the mistake he has committed. To be a ruler of a country is indeed a difficult task. The king has to worry if the rain fails or the subjects are in difficulty. Nothing to be proud of to be born in a royal family."<sup>3</sup> After expressing the difficulties of ruling a country Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṇ felt unhappy over the tragic death of the Pāṇḍya king.

Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṇ then looked at his wife and asked an answer for the following query. "Pāṇḍya's wife died immediately after her husband's death. Whereas Kaṇṇaki after her husband's death came to the hill and reached heaven. Of the two ladies who do you consider is the greater?"<sup>4</sup> Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṇ's wife applauded the chastity of both the women. She however, said, "Pāṇḍyan's wife deserves commendation while the lady who came to your country should

be worshipped.”<sup>5</sup> On hearing this the king looked at his ministers. They suggested to the king that a statue for Kaṇṇaki could be chiselled out from a stone brought either from the mountain Potikai or the Himalayas. After listening to all these Iḷaṅkō turned to Cāttanār and expressed his desire to write an epic on Kaṇṇaki. Whereupon Cāttanār commended the move and said that it would be appropriate for the royal saint to take up the task of writing an epic, which dwelt on the three Tamil kingdoms. Accordingly Iḷaṅkō completed the epic *Cilappatikāram*, whereas his elder brother Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṇ constructed a temple in stone. Iḷaṅkō composed an epic in words. Many temples were dedicated to Kaṇṇaki both in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, soon after Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṇ raised the first memorial. Quite a few of them were destroyed and some lost their nomenclature too. However the monument raised in words by Iḷaṅkō survives the test of time.

The story of Kaṇṇaki should have been popular among the people in the form of folk tales. Even now places like Mattakkalappu in Ceylon have folk songs pertaining to the story of Kaṇṇaki. Her story in Tamil Nadu has undergone many changes over the centuries and become part of *Vaiciyapurāṇam*. Even in one of the oldest dramas entitled *Kōvalaṇ Nāṭakam*, the story has altogether a different version.

*Pattinī Worship* (The term *pattinī* means a chaste woman)

The story of Kaṇṇaki had a tremendous impact on the womenfolk in Tamil Nadu. Likewise many changes have taken place in the temples dedicated to *Amman* (Sakti). Since Kaṇṇaki successfully argued her case against the Pāṇḍya king and burnt the city of Madurai on a Friday, it became an auspicious day for the womenfolk in Tamil Nadu. According to the epic, Kaṇṇaki wore golden anklets. When she was raised to the status of a goddess, with golden anklets, women started wearing silver ornaments instead of gold ones on their anklets. Since a tremendous change in Kaṇṇaki's life took place on a Friday in the Tamil month of Āṭi, both the day and the month became auspicious in *Māriyamman* temples. In those temple festivals of dance and music, the anklet assumed an important place. Later, stories were written to the effect that goddess Kālī (Durgā) was born as Kaṇṇaki. Treading on fire became a ritual in Draupadi temple festivals. It can be said

\* The term *pattinī* means a chaste woman.



that this ritual is based on an incident which occurred when Kaṇṇaki set Madurai on fire. At that time only the saints, Brahmans, women, children and others escaped the fury of fire. Perhaps this escape from the fury of fire is symbolized by the present day fire-treading ritual.

Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ sowed the seeds of *pattinī* worship in his epic. Although Kaṇṇaki's role comes to an end in the second canto of the epic itself, the author devoted the third canto to deification of Kaṇṇaki and inauguration of *Pattinī* worship in the country. The title of the epic originates from the anklets worn by Kaṇṇaki. The corresponding Tamil term for anklet is *cilampu*. Therefore the title of the epic, *Cilappatikāram* is derived from *cilampu*. This ornament is mentioned only in a few place in *Cilappatikāram*. Kaṇṇaki's *cilampu* is shown on her ankles at the time of her marriage, for the first time in the first chapter of the first canto or *Pukār-kāṇṭam*. Again in the ninth chapter of the same canto the *cilampu* is shown, when Kōvalaṇ expressed his desire to Kaṇṇaki to start a new life in Madurai, she offered her anklets,<sup>6</sup> the only remaining ornament in her possession, as capital for a new venture. The *cilampu* appears twice in the second canto or *Maduraik-kāṇṭam*. At first it appears on the last day of Kōvalaṇ's life in Madurai. While walking with one of the anklets along the streets of Madurai, it was shown to the royal jeweller for valuation. Secondly when Kōvalaṇ died, Kaṇṇaki took one other anklet in her hand and proceeded to the Pāṇḍya's court where she broke it to prove her husband's innocence. Finally, in the third canto or *Vaṅcīk-kāṇṭam*, after Kaṇṇaki was deified the anklet appears before the Cēra king. Thus the author showed the anklets in appropriate places in the epic and named the epic as *Cilappatikāram* after the anklets.

### *Artistic Mind*

Iḷaṅkō Aṭikaḷ was a many-faceted personality. He knew the life of royalty well by virtue of his birth. However he renounced that life and became a monk. He showed great eagerness in portraying the best of human virtues in life. He possessed an eclectic mind, despite being a Jain by faith. Though he belonged to the Cēra country, he had the vision to consider the Cēra, Cōḷa and Pāṇḍya territories as a unified Tamil Nadu. Another unique feature in him was his artistic mind. This is revealed not merely by the elaborate description of various aspects of dance and music but by

the very handling of descriptions and emotions in the epic. The objects in nature are described in two different places to convey two contradictory moods. This also reveals his artistic talent.

There are examples in the epic to illustrate this point. When Kōvalaṇ and Kaṇṇaki started their family life two natural objects, the southerly wind (*tenṇal*) and the bee are described to illustrate that blessed mood.<sup>7</sup> The same objects are described during the period of their separation to reflect melancholy.<sup>8</sup> After Kōvalaṇ's departure from Kaṇṇaki the poet mentions tears of happiness and sorrow in the eyes of two different types of women characters in the epic. Mātavi in the company of Kōvalaṇ and all those women with their husbands shed tears of happiness. While those separated from their husbands like Kaṇṇaki, shed tears of sorrow.<sup>9</sup> The poet twice describes the moonlight night: the first one is immediately after Kōvalaṇ-Kaṇṇaki's marriage and the second is when they are proceeding to Madurai, on a moonlit summer night. The first description reveals the happiness of a newly married couple,<sup>10</sup> while the second eases the drudgery of a fateful journey on a summer night.<sup>11</sup> Here again one can perceive the contrast in the description of moonlit nights. There are two blandishments in the epic addressed by Kōvalaṇ to Kaṇṇaki. The first one is addressed on the nuptial day with carnal passion and as such much praise is showered on Kaṇṇaki's youth and physical beauty.<sup>12</sup> Whereas on the day of his death the second blandishment occurs, which reveal not only Kaṇṇaki's sterling qualities but also how Kōvalaṇ cherishes and values them.<sup>13</sup>

There are two epistles in the epic. Both are addressed to Kōvalaṇ by Mātavi. The first one is written on the very day he left her from the sea-shore for good, though she is unaware of it. Nevertheless the epistle reflects her confidence that he belongs unquestionably to her. She has written the letter proper expressing her abiding love on the petals of a white screwpine flower with the bud of *pittikai* as the stylus and the *cenpaṇcukkuḷamu* (a fragrant red paste) as the ink. Then it is sent to Kōvalaṇ dexterously tied to a garland of fragrant flowers.<sup>14</sup> The second letter is written in a mood of despondency but with extreme humility and respect.<sup>15</sup> The first is a delightful letter of love, whereas the second is a sublime letter of humility.

Iḷaṅkō Aṭilal was attracted both by the fine arts as well as the folk arts. He realised the pulsation of life in the folk arts and

utilised them in appropriate places in the epic. Of the thirty chapters in the epic, the *Kāṇalvari*, *Vēṭṭuvavari*, *Āycciyarkuravai*, *Kuṇṇakuravai*<sup>16</sup> are devoted to folk dances and music. Songs concerning the people living in the littoral region and the river Kaveri are found in *Kāṇalvari*. Likewise the folk songs of the highwaymen, the shepherds and the people of montane region are found in *Vēṭṭuvavari*, *Āycciyarkuravai* and *Kuṇṇakuravai* respectively. Besides, in the twenty-ninth chapter, *Vāḷttukkātai*, many songs on folk themes such as *ammāṇai*, *kantukavari*, *ūcalvari* and *vaḷḷaippāṭtu*\* are included. Though in the hands of Iḷaṅkō, these folk songs attain literary merit, they still retain their spirit of folk songs.

Apart from the aforesaid five chapters there are others too where songs on folk themes are mentioned. References are found in the epic regarding the most popular songs among the agricultural labourers such as 'sowing songs', 'weeding songs' and 'harvesting songs'. While mentioning the welcome extended by his subjects to the Cēra king on his victorious return from the North, the author refers to four types of folk songs prevalent among the people of the four-fold regions in the country. The women in the montane regions played on their harps songs relating to the bravery of the king's elephants in the North Indian war, while looking after the millet fields.<sup>17</sup> In the pasture lands, the farmers sang songs addressing the yoked oxen thus: "Our king razed the enemies' forts. That victorious king's birthday falls tomorrow. Therefore tomorrow will be your holiday. You could be happy and free without the yolk."<sup>18</sup> The cowherds who were grazing their cows along the shores of the river Āṇporunai sang in the following manner. "Oh cows! our king who returns victoriously from the Himalayas will bring new cattle from there. You are going to get their companionship soon. Tomorrow you could rejoice in their company."<sup>19</sup> Women of the littoral

\* The Tamil term *ammāṇai* literally means a song sung at the time of a ball game. It is a sort of jugglery game in which three girls participate and play with a certain number of balls at a time. The balls go up in the air in quick succession from the hand, catching and throwing up without cessation till a ball drops on the ground. A song accompanies the play: the first girl recites the first two lines of a song, the second, the subsequent two lines and the third completes it with an additional line. The game is still popular among the village girls in Tamil Nadu. *Kantukavari* is also a ball song, with a special rhythm corresponding to the swift movements of the game. Short and crisp words are used in the song to convey the rhythm of the play. The term *ūcal* means swing. It is a song sung by girls while swinging. The term *vaḷḷaippāṭtu* means the pestle song. It is sung by women while hulling grains in a mortar with pestles.

region sang the following song: "Oh! maids! as a mark of our king's invasion let us sing the praise of the vañci flower (*Hiptage madoblata*). As a symbol of his victory let us sing the praise of the tumbai flower (*Leucas linifolia*) Let us sing to the palmyrah flower the royal flower of the Cēra dynasty. Let us sing."<sup>20</sup>

All these references regarding folk traditions in music, highlight Iḷaṅkō's artistic mind. Some of his compositions based on folk traditions are noted for their artistry. The following poem in *Aycciyarkuravai* sung by cowherdresses substantiates this point.

Oh Toli!  
That Māyavaṇ (Krishna)  
Did a miracle  
Using calf as a rod  
Woodapples he knocked down  
To our herds  
If Māyavaṇ comes  
Can't we hear  
That melliflous music which  
Emanates from his Koṇṇai flute?

Oh Toli!  
That Māyavaṇ (Krishna)  
Did a miracle  
Using snake as a rope  
Churned He the ocean of milk  
To our herds  
If Māyavaṇ comes  
Can't we hear  
That sweet music  
Gushing from his āmbal flute?

Oh Toli!  
That Māyavaṇ (Krishna)  
In our uplands  
Did a miracle  
Single handed  
Did he break a kruntam tree  
To our herd this morn  
If Māyavaṇ comes  
Can't we hear  
That melliflous music  
Pour forth from his mullai flute?<sup>21</sup>

The cowherdresses folk songs extolling Kaṇṇan's (Krishna's) flute music are enchanting. Likewise other laudatory poems on

Krishna are noted for their dexterous nuance and enchanting rhythm. The following poem confirms this.

What is the use of possessing ears  
If it hears not Cēvakaṇ (Krishna's) greatness?  
What's the use of having ears  
If it hears not Tirumāl's fame?

What is the use of possessing eyes  
If it sees not Kariyavaṇ's beauty?  
What's the use of having eyes  
Eyes that blinks and sees not Kariyavaṇ's beauty?

What is the use of possessing a tongue  
If it praises not Kaṇṇan's fame?  
What is the use of having a tongue  
If it chants not the eternal name Nārāyaṇa?<sup>22</sup>

Likewise there are hunter's songs sung in praise of their worshipping deity, Kālī. Although they are bhakti poems, they exhibit the hunter's ruthlessness, resoluteness, bravery as well as his unflinching faith in God. The Kuṇṇavar's (people of the montane region) devotional songs in praise of Murukaṇ, exhibit the emotions of love and piety.

Some of the 'ball songs' sung by the girls of the city of Vañci, has a special rhythm reflecting their nimble movements while playing the game. The following poem in translation, though fails to bring out the rhythmic aspect, will give the reader some idea of a 'ball song'.

A creeper of gold  
You are!  
Oh! beautiful girl  
Glitter thy golden necklace  
Twinkle thy sparkling girdles  
Ornaments twinkling and glittering  
Let us go everywhere  
To play the game of ball  
Blessing the Pāṇḍya king  
'Long live'  
Long live the Pāṇḍya  
Who wears the garland  
Offered by Indra.<sup>23</sup>

The Tamil poem in transliteration is as follows:

Poṇṇilaṅku pūṅkoṭi polaṅcey kōtai villiṭa  
 Miṇṇilaṅku mēkalaika! ārppa ārppa eṅkaṇum  
 Teṇṇaṇ vālka vālka eṇṇu ceṇṇu pantaṭittumē  
 Tēvar āra mārpaṇ vālka eṇṇu pantaṭittumē.

Thr girls while swinging of pounding paddy used to sing the praise of their king and those compositions came down to us in the form of the "swing songs" and the "pestle songs". The rhythm in these poems are appropriate to the movement of the swing or to the movements of women while husking or hulling the grain.

Kaṇṇaki's wailing on hearing her husband's murder on false charges is brought out in her own words in the chapter entitled *Tuṇpamālai* (a garland of sorrow).<sup>24</sup> Her sorrow is given, as if spoken in the first person. These poems are classic examples for depicting the feelings of sadness. The next chapter *Ūrcūlvārī*<sup>25</sup> also is a portrayal of her wailing. The form and rhythm of the poems bring out her utter desolateness.

#### *Certain New Features in the Epic*

In *Cilappatikāram* Iḷaṅkō introduced new types of metrical compositions, unknown to his predecessors, to portray different kinds of emotions. In the *Caṅkam* classics for example, only *akaval* and *veṇpā* metres predominate. There is rhythm and music in *'kali* and *paripāṭal* types of compositions. However Iḷaṅkō's successors used *tāḷicai*, *turai* and *viruttam* types of compositions. Because of Iḷaṅkō these developments are made possible, for he introduced new types of poetical compositions rich in form, rhythm and melody so as to convey various emotions and moods. Folk music is given a prominent place in chapters such as *Kāṇalvārī* and *Āycciyar kuravai*. Iḷaṅkō has formulated new types of verses from the folk songs that were in vogue. Those new poetic forms are undoubtedly a contribution to Tamil literature.

Members of the royal families happened to be the main characters in ancient epics of the world, whereas in *Cilappatikāram*, the main characters came from the merchant class. This itself is a departure from other epics. A lady belonging to a merchant family is the heroine; and the title of the epic is derived from her *cilampu*, the ornament worn on her ankles. Since Iḷaṅkō showed the way



by making commoners as the main characters in his epic, other poets too followed his method boldly. In the second epic, *Maṇimēkalai*, the heroine happens to be the daughter of a concubine. Secondly, Iḷaṅkō made a social revolution by elevating Mātavi to a second place in the epic, although her heritage was despised both in society and in later works. No doubt Kōvalaṇ too in a mood of anger despised her heritage in one place; later he realised that she was an irreproachable character.<sup>26</sup>

Mātavi renounced her worldly attachments and became a Buddhist nun on hearing the tragic death of Kōvalaṇ, on whom she had showered her love. Besides this, she also converted her only daughter Maṇimēkalai to become a Buddhist nun. In fact the second epic in Tamil narrates her interesting life story. Mātavi was so concerned about her family origin that she preferred to call her daughter as Kannaki. *Cilappatikāram* is the only epic in Tamil literature in which we find a woman of easy virtue not only despise and give up her profession but also break up its tradition.

Generally Jain monks never praise family life. Nor do they give prominence to women. Iḷaṅkō broke this tradition as well. In his epic, he praises family life as well as gives prominence to Kaṇṇaki's life of chastity. He pays glowing tribute to her greatness through a Jain nun, Kavunti Aṭikaḷ, another woman character in the epic.<sup>27</sup> For an epic or drama to be interesting, there must be portrayal of good and bad characters. It is also necessary to portray that difficulties of the noble characters are engineered by the villain. In *Cilappatikāram* Iḷaṅkō did not show that a villain was responsible for the misfortunes suffered by Kōvalaṇ and Kaṇṇaki. However in the second canto, the royal jeweller of Madurai is portrayed as a villain and is blamed for the death of Kōvalaṇ. Of the thirty chapters the royal jeweller appears only in one chapter. However towards the end of the chapter, *Kolaikkaḷakkātai*, Iḷaṅkō points out that fate is responsible for the death of Kōvalaṇ and thereby absolves the jeweller from the crime.<sup>28</sup> Even the Pāṇḍya king cannot be considered a villain, for the affected Kaṇṇaki herself vindicates him saying "he was not at fault".<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the epic is without a villain. It is again a novel feature to show that an epic could be absorbing without the introduction of a villain.

### *Maṇimēkalai*

*Maṇimēkalai* is considered to be the second epic in Tamil.

From the point of view of the story, it appears to be a continuation of *Cilappatikāram*. Therefore both *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai* are regarded as the 'twin epics' in Tamil literature. The heroine, Maṇimēkalai, after whom the epic is named, is the daughter of Kōvalaṇ and Mātavi. Maṇimēkalai's relatives wanted her to be a dancing girl to follow the family tradition after attaining age. In the meantime Mātavi on Kōvalaṇ's death renounced her worldly ties. She approached Aṇavaṇar, a Buddhist monk, obtained initiation and became a Buddhist nun. At the same time she made up her mind not to allow Maṇimēkalai to be dancing girl. Her head was shaved in keeping with Buddhist religious principles before she was made a nun. Thereafter Mātavi feared to call Maṇimēkalai her daughter, lest that should lead her back to the old disreputable life. Henceforth Maṇimēkalai was called the daughter of Kaṇṇaki. Despite becoming a nun, Maṇimēkalai's life was not free from annoying troubles. The prince fell in love with her and followed her closely wherever she went. She escaped from him with the help of the family goddess or angel. The angel removed Maṇimēkalai to the distant island of Maṇipallavam, where she paid homage to the Buddha, learnt about her previous birth as well as her mission in the current life. She returned to her country with a magical bowl, called *amutacurapi* which once filled with food by a chaste woman, will ever be full. So filled with food, she gained the power to satisfy the hunger of many people. She travelled throughout the country, removed hunger and disease from people as well as preached them virtue. She performed many righteous deeds and obtained salvation according to the Buddhist cannon. Maduraikkūlavāṇikaṇ Cāttaṇār wrote her story into an epic. In contrast to Iḷaṅkō's religious eclecticism, Cāttaṇār propagated only Buddhism in his epic. Since *Maṇimēkalai* has a religious motive, Buddhist religious propaganda predominates over literary features. To express different moods and emotions, the epic *Cilappatikāram* employed different kinds of rhythm and metres. This feature is absent in *Maṇimēkalai*. The entire epic is written in the prosaic *akaval* metre.

The unique merit of the epic *Maṇimēkalai* lies in narrating the story in a lucid manner and in explaining clearly the Buddhist moral truths and ethics. Apart from this, the heroine of the story is undoubtedly an incomparable women of great excellence. The heroine, Maṇimēkalai receives more commendation from the

readers than the epic itself. She gains a place in their hearts. Besides being the imaginative heroine, she is a unique woman in the history of the country. Despite being a young, beautiful intelligent and cultured lady, she sacrificed the love of a prince and became a Buddhist nun. The readers consider this as a great sacrifice. Greater still is her life which is filled with grace and sympathy. After obtaining the magic bowl in her hand in the Maṇipallavam island she realises that "those who feed the hungry are really those who give life,"<sup>30</sup> and travels from one place to another offering food to the poor and the needy.

Maṇimēkalai declares in the twenty-fifth chapter thus:

If you ask,  
 "What is righteousness?"  
 Then listen carefully to this.  
 For human beings  
 I have not known  
 Anything more important  
 Than food and shelter.<sup>31</sup>

She followed her declared objectives and fed all the hungry mouths with the help of the magic bowl, *amutacurapi*. She showered her boundless love and grace on the blind, dumb, deaf, deformed, diseased and destitutes. Once she was clapped in prison for suspected murder of the Cōḷa prince. When the king came to know of her sterling qualities and realized his mistake, he ordered her immediate release. At the time of her release she requested the king to convert all the state prisons into dharmasālās. This shows her nobility of mind. The queen too suspected Maṇimēkalai for her son's death and troubled her. When she realized the truth she began to revere her. Maṇimēkalai said to the queen with modesty, "You are the queen of this country and the mother of the prince, who loved me. It is not proper on your part to pay obeisance to me."<sup>32</sup> Through Maṇimēkalai, many noble virtues are clearly expressed in the epic. For example, while Maṇimēkalai is consoling the queen's grief at the murder of her son, she explains the truth of life in the following manner: "Oh Queen! are you crying for the body or the soul? Are you crying for the body which has been taken to the burial ground? Or are you crying for the soul; the place to which it should go is determined by its actions in mundane life. We cannot know where it goes finally. If you love your son's

soul, it is your duty to have compassion on all forms of life."<sup>33</sup> Likewise many of the Buddha's gospels are revealed clearly not only in Maṇimēkalai's speeches but in her way of life.

### NOTES

1. N.M. Vēṅkatacāmi Nāṭṭār (ed.), *Cilappatikāram*, 4th edn (Madras, 1953), chapter 25, lines 57–60, p. 509. (Henceforth reference to chapters, lines and pages will given as 25 : 57–60, p. 509. The epic *Cilappatikāram* is divided into three cantos and each canto is again subdivided into several *kātais*. For the sake of convenience *kātais* are mentioned here as chapters.)
2. 25: 67–90, pp. 509–10.
3. 25: 95–104, p. 510.
4. 25: 107–109, p. 510.
5. 25: 111–14, pp. 510–11.
6. 9: 73, p. 211.
7. 2: 14–25, pp. 31–32.
8. 4: 15–18, pp. 90–91.
9. 4: 27–46 & 48–71, pp. 91–92.
10. 2: 26–27, p. 32.
11. 13: 17–29, p. 297.
12. 2: 37–81, pp. 32–33.
13. 16: 84–91, p. 376.
14. 8: 54–67, p. 194.
15. 13: 87–92, p. 299.
16. Chapters 7, 12, 17 and 24 respectively.
17. 27: 220–24, p. 563.
18. 27: 225–230, p. 563.
19. 27: 231–41, p. 563.
20. 27: 242–50, p. 563.
21. 17, pms 1–3, pp. 398–99.
22. 17, pms 1–3, pp. 400–401.
23. 29, pm 20, p. 614.
24. Chapter 18.
25. Chapter 19.
26. 13 : 94–95, p. 299.
27. 15 : 139–44, pp. 353–54.
28. 16 : 217, p. 380.
29. 29, pm 10, p. 613.
30. U.V. Caminata Iyer (ed.), *Maṇimēkalai*, 5th edn (Madras, 1956)

11 : 96, p. 129.

31. P.V. Comacuntaranar (ed.), *Maṇimēkalai*, revised edn (Madras, 1975), 25 : 228–31, pp. 575–76.
32. U.V. Caminata Iyer, *Maṇimēkalai*, 23:T1–T2, p. 259.
33. Ibid, 23:72–79, p. 259.

## Devotional Poems

(600–900 A.D.)

### *Bhakti Movement*

The age of Bhakti movement is clearly noticed after the periods of Cankam and Ethical literatures. From the 7th century onwards the Nāyaṇmārs and Ālvārs of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sects of Hinduism respectively travelled from temple to temple singing the glory of the presiding deities in soul-stirring songs in order to speak for their respective sects in the Tamil country. Their emotive devotional songs were used as an instrument to restrict the undue influence of Buddhism and Jainism in the country. The role played by Tamil and music in this movement is clearly attested by the following laudatory lines. Saint Cuntarar regarded Lord Siva himself as the very personification of the “seven *ragas* (rhymes) and the soul of music.”<sup>1</sup> Another saint Tiruñāṇacampantar was praised for “popularising Tamil everyday through music.”<sup>2</sup> Yet another saint Tirunāvukkaracar declared that “I am not aware of forgetting Tamil and music.”<sup>3</sup>

The Jains and the Buddhists preached rigorous discipline in one's personal life. Emphasis was given to the disciplining of senses through fasting and rejection of pleasures. They gave undue importance to renunciation. The Nāyaṇmārs and the Ālvārs on the contrary utilised the fine arts like dance and drama to spread the cult of *bhakti* in the country. To them family life and the performan-



ce of a vocation were not a bar to the realisation of the Supreme. Nevertheless they emphasised that the mind must be imbued with the spirit of God. As a result of this pragmatic view of the wordly life, the Bhakti movement helped the temples to emerge as the popularising centres of all fine arts. The Nāyanmārs' and the Ālvārs' metrical compositions in Tamil helped the Bhakti movement to become popular.

In the case of Saivites the musical compositions of Tirumūlar and Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār heralded the beginning. Whereas for the Vaiṣṇavites the harbingers of the movement were Pēyālvār, Pūttatālvār and Poikaiyālvār.

### *Tirumantiram*

Tirumūlar, the author of *Tirumantiram*, composed three thousand verses. In keeping with the title, the verses are pregnant with hidden allegorical meaning, though known for their epigrammatic simplicity. The work is a treasury of philosophical ideas, yogic and mystical practices. References are also found to the Śiddha system of medicine. While discussing the concept of devotional love Tirumūlar says, "Love and Siva are not two different entities. Very few know that they are one and the same. Only those who possess this knowledge are enlightened persons and achieve the qualities of godliness."

Ignorant are those who regard  
Love and Siva as two entities  
Love is Siva that none knows  
Love is Siva if all know  
Remain all will  
The very identity of Love and God.<sup>4</sup>

Tirumūlar proceeds in this verse from the known reality of pure love to an unknown reality of God and concludes that there exists little difference between the two.

In another verse Tirumūlar gives little importance to the severe austerities practised by the seekers of God. He comments, "Neither starvation nor mortification will ever help anyone to realise Him. He can be realised only by those who pine for His grace with pure love at heart."

What use is there  
To dry the bones like firewood  
Fry the flesh golden brown  
Save those who pine with love  
None could reach that jewel (God).<sup>5</sup>

Yet in another verse Tirumūlar exhorts that service to human beings is more important than the worship of gods in temples with offerings. "Our offerings to the temple deities never reach God, who resides in the hearts of walking temples, i.e. human beings. Whereas our offerings to human beings will reach God who resides in the temple as well."

Offerings to the God  
Pictured in temples  
Never will reach  
The God in humans.  
Offerings to the humans  
Surely will reach  
The God in temples.<sup>6</sup>

Tirumūlar employs the mystical language of allegory to explain, that one could attain realisation of the Supreme by disciplining the five senses. Though many analyse the external world, only a few analyse the working of the inner mind. What do those who analyse the inner mind perceive? They see the five cows wandering about without any restraint. Here the cows are an allegory which in the real sense mean the mind and the component five senses. The mind functions with the help of the five senses. They stray about breaking loose from all restraint. They are personified as five uncontrollable straying cows. If one can bring them under control, then the five cows will give the milk of enlightenment.

If one sees within  
Then he can perceive  
Five cows are there  
Straying furiously about  
If there exists a cowherd  
And their fury controlled  
The five cows  
Offer nectar of milk  
If one sees within.<sup>7</sup>

According to Tirumūlar, God has created good and evil things in life, and it is left to the discretion of man to choose the right one. To lead a good life there are many noble things to choose from. Likewise there are many evil things, though attractive, which bring in untold misery. The Supreme shows the noble path for one to tread. He also creates the mimosa along the pathway. So long one sticks to the path of rectitude he is unaffected by the mimosa. Otherwise it pricks his feet.

The pathway He created  
And created the mimosa too  
Straying out of the path  
Mimosa prick the feet  
Those treading on the straight path  
Never are pricked by mimosa.<sup>8</sup>

Death opens the eyes of man to the transitory nature of life. This truth is brought about effortlessly by Tirumūlar in the following verse. "People gather around the dead body of a person and wail and weep aloud. They call him a corpse soon after his death. Then the body is cremated. Those who follow the corpse, after the purificatory bath forget all about the impermanence of life and immanence of death.

Gathers around the corpse  
And wails over his death.  
He loses his name  
And is called a corpse  
Taken to the crematorium  
The body is cremated  
Those who follow  
Have their purificatory bath  
And forget all about death.<sup>9</sup>

Tirumūlar reveals many rare truths in three thousand verses. They are written in the *viruttam* metre with a variety of rhythm depending on the very cadence of his ideas.

#### *Kāraikkāl Ammaiār*

The saint, Kāraikkāl Ammaiār, lived at Kāraikkāl in the 6th century A.D. She was the wife of a merchant. While living with

her husband a miracle happened and thereafter he began to show fear and respect rather than love and affection to her. After some time he left her for good, married another woman and began to live with her. When Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār learnt about her husband's remarriage she gave up youth and beauty as of no use to her. She wandered from one temple to another singing the praise of Lord Siva, and finally reached the famous shrine at Tiruvalangadu, where she prayed to Siva and gained salvation. She calls herself a *pēy* or ghost in many of her devotional songs. Prayers are offered to her even now at the Tiruvalangadu temple, which is about thirty miles from the Madras city. A festival is also celebrated there in her honour. Her devotional outpourings have come down to us in the form of three works namely, *Arputat-tiruvantāti*, *Irattai-manimālai* and *Mūtta-tiruppatikaṅkaḷ*. These songs are regarded as the oldest among the available Śaivite devotional poems. Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār's poems are known for their sincere outpouring of her heart to God and for their philosophical content.

Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār's devotion to Lord Siva is borne out from the following substance of her poems. "Ever since I came into the world and learnt to lisp I had taken your feet as my abode. Oh Lord Siva, when are you going to free me from the bondage of this world?"<sup>10</sup> "Even if he does not deliver me from the pain of birth, nor show me mercy, nor the path to follow, my heart will never cease to love him."<sup>11</sup>

### *The First Three Ālvārs*

Pūtattālvār mentions his mode of prayer, which is a happy blending of devotion and philosophy in one of his rare devotional hymns. In the following poem, he mentions not of the outer light, but the inner one, the noumenon for this prayer. Pūtattālvār lighted a lamp, for which love is the lamp dish, pining for the grace of Lord is the ghee therein, the ecstasy of heart is the wick.

For a lamp I lighted  
Love was the lamp-dish  
Pining was the ghee therein  
Heart was its wick  
Thus I lighted a lamp  
To the light of lights,  
To Lord Nārāyaṇa

I outpoured my heart  
In philosophical Tamil.<sup>12</sup>

The Ālvārs believe that wholehearted devotion to God is enough and the body need not be subjected to austere penance. Pēyālvār brings out this belief clearly "There is no need to do penance on the mountain, in the water and in the midst of fire. All evils will disappear if one could pray sincerely to God offering flowers."<sup>13</sup>

The seeds of *bhakti* cult, that was sown by some of the noble souls during the sixth century, germinated into the Bhakti movement during the succeeding centuries in Tamil Nadu. It caught the imagination of both the commoners and the kings. Since the Nāyanmārs and Ālvārs travelled from one temple to another singing devotional hymns, not only the importance of temples increased but their modest structures grew in size and stature. The Bhakti movement which originated in the Tamil country spread beyond its boundaries and caused the birth of devotional literature in various languages of India.

### *Tēvāram*

In the seventh century, Tiruñāvukkaracar and Nāṇacampantar sang thousands of devotional songs in praise of the presiding deity in many of the Saiva temples in Tamil Nadu. Though these two Nāyanmārs composed several thousands songs, only seven thousand are now available. Another thousand songs, composed by Cuntarar in the eighth century are also available. Altogether the three Nāyanmārs sang eight thousand hymns, which have come down to posterity as *Tēvāram*, the corpus of devotional songs in Tamil literature. All the *Tēvāram* devotional songs are sung to the accompaniment of music and every song is sung in a particular *paṇ* or metre from the day of its origin to this day.

Nāṇacampantar composed his soul-stirring devotional songs to the rhythm of *tāḷam*, a musical instrument. He was accompanied by Tirunīlakaṇṭa Yālppāṇar, a member of the *pāṇ* clan to all the temples. He played the *yāl* instrument as an accompaniment to the musical compositions of Nāṇacampantar. Only the predecessors of Yālppāṇar were responsible for guarding the musical tradition that one finds in the *Tēvāram* hymns. Their notes are extant. As such *Tēvāram* is not merely a body of devotional songs but a

treasure-house for guarding 1,300 years of musical tradition. It must be remembered that such a wealth of information on music is not available in any part of the world.

### *Tirunānacampantar*

Campantar started composing devotional songs on Siva at an early age. He was the first hymnologist, who brought dance and music as worthy arts, which could be fruitfully used in temple-worship. While singing the greatness of a temple, he will invariably describe its natural setting. Therefore descriptions of many facets of nature find a prime place in his poems. Next to *Caṅkam* literature, Campantar's *Tēvāram* abounds in the description of nature. While praising the deity at Tiruvaivāru, Campantar gives a lavish description of nature. Some of the descriptions are as follows: "The female monkeys at Tiruvaivāru mistake the tinkle that emanates from the steps of dancers and the background sound of the drum as the distant role of thunder. They, therefore, climb the trees to ascertain whether or not it rains. While the *kuyils* sing the lullaby from the hillock and while the southerly wind, wafting the sweet fragrance of honey-filled flowers gently touches the feet of sugar-canes, they sleep in the fields of Tiruvaivāru. When a ripe coconut falls from the tree, a frightened young buffalo whirls into a paddy field and finally settles down in a field where lotus flowers are in full bloom."<sup>14</sup> In the same way the scenic beauty of nature is dexterously woven into the texture of Campantar's metrical compositions.

The devotional songs of Nāyanmārs are classified into *patikams* or chapters containing ten songs each. Nānacampantar's *patikams* however contain eleven songs each. In most of them readers can notice a pattern of arrangement in the subject matter. The eighth poem in every *patikam* invariably narrates Ravana's efforts to lift the mount Kailās, the sufferings undergone by him as a result of this imprudent behaviour, and his ultimate surrender to Lord Siva. The ninth poem extols the greatness of Siva as Supreme Being unapproachable even by Brahma and Tirumāl. The tenth poem is also a biting sarcasm despising the unnatural life led by Jain and Buddhist monks. During this period Buddhist and Jain monks gave undue importance to renunciation. They also deprecated the life of householders. It was then that Nānacampantar came



on the scene to denounce the pseudo-monks and to give the women folk their rightful place in the social life.

Everyday we can live  
Well in this world  
Without doubt still we can  
Attain salvation  
In the prosperous city of Kaḷumalam  
See clearly for yourself  
That he is with her inseparably.<sup>15</sup>

It is a custom among the Saivite Tamils to recite this *Tēvāram* song joyfully during marriages. In particular, the aforesaid poem gives enormous confidence to an aspirant that he can attain salvation remaining in the house. To strengthen this conviction among the devotees, Nāṇacampantar points out the Arttanāricuvara image of Lord Siva where Umādēvi is the left part of Siva. Therefore it preaches life affirmation. Many of Campantar's devotional songs give enormous encouragement and confidence to lead a normal worldly life. In his poems it is difficult to note even a trace of life's weariness, anxiety, or sorrow.

Once Nāṇacampantar had to proceed to Madurai to participate in a debate with the Jain monks. The day was not an auspicious one according to the almanac. Therefore his followers dissuaded him from performing the journey. At that time he told them, "Lord has a woman on his left side. His throat is dark because of the poison drunk to save the world. Both the river Ganges and the moon are on his head. He is in my heart. Since he has filled my heart all the week days, Sunday to Saturday, the two snakes Rāku and Kētu will never harm me. They are harmless for the devotees of Siva.

She, whose shoulders are bamboo-like  
Resides on His side  
And his throat is dark  
Because of the poison drunk  
He plays on Vina  
On his matted hair  
The Ganges and the moon He wears

As he resides within me  
 Nothing can ever harm me  
 Whether Sunday, Monday, Tuesday,  
 Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday  
 Or the two snakes,  
 All of them harmless  
 They are good, very good  
 For his devotees  
 They are good.<sup>16</sup>

There was no place for caste, untouchability and superstitions in Nāṇacampantar's life. In fact Tirunīlakaṇṭar, an untouchable, constantly accompanied him to all the temples to provide the background instrumental music to his devotional outpourings. Along with Nāṇacampantar, Tirunīlakaṇṭar visited the homes and streets where Brahmans lived. Tradition avers that when the Brahmins feared that Nīlakaṇṭar's presence would pollute their Vedic rites, Nāṇacampantar brought him closer to the dull ritual fire, which on his approach began to burn brightly.

Words of confidence and encouragement abound in Nāṇacampantar's *Tēvāram*: "My words are the words of Lord Siva"; "This is my word". As in his *Tēvāram*, so also in his life he was always full of confidence, clarity, ardour and enormous hope. Such was his faith in God. Those who followed the Saiva tradition, consider him not as an ordinary human being but as the very incarnation of Lord Murugaṇ.

Tradition has it that he sang about 1,60,000 devotional songs. But now only 4,168 poems are available. Every one of them is meant to be sung with a specific *paṇ* or metre. Nāṇacampantar and those who followed him to temples sang these *Tēvāram* hymns to the accompaniment of music. Certain intricate types of metrical compositions like *yamakam* and *maṭakku* are found in Nāṇacampantar's *Tēvāram*.

Since Sankara happened to be a South Indian, he knew about Nāṇacampantar and called him *Tirāviṭa Cicu*, meaning a child *jnani* belonging to the Dravidian race. Nāṇacampantar's contemporaries therefore praised him as an enlightened soul, though he was a mere child. The Bhakti sutra in Sanskrit mentions one 'Kavunṭinya' as the leader of the Bhakti movement. Scholars consider that this tribute in the Sanskrit work is applicable only to Nāṇacampantar, since he is referred to as 'Kavunṭiyar'.

*Tirunāvukkaracar*

Tirunāvukkaracar was a great scholar both in Sanskrit and Tamil. He was also a consummate scholar in Jain literary, philosophical, and religious works. Before being reconverted to Saivism, he had been the leader of the Jains.

Tirunāvukkaracar's family members were staunch Saivites. His sister devoted herself to the service of the temple. Due to her efforts he was reconverted to Saivism, lived for many long years, visited many Saiva shrines, and composed many devotional songs. A section of them must be sung with *tālam* and raga, whereas the other sections can be sung without *tālam* but with raga. Those intended to be sung without *tālam* are composed in a new metrical composition known as *Tiruttāṇṭakam*. Some of the Ālvārs too composed this type of verses. Since Tirunāvukkaracar happened to be adept in *Tiruttāṇṭakam* poems, he was praised as Tāṇṭakavēntar, the king among the composers of *Tiruttāṇṭakam*. Tāṇṭakams have the capacity to move and melt the hearts of devotees.

There are many interesting anecdotes connected with Tirunāvukkaracar's life. They reveal how he faced those difficult situations in life with unflinching belief in God. Soon after his reconversion to Saivism, the ruler, a Jain, ordered Tirunāvukkaracar to appear before him. On receiving the order, Tirunāvukkaracar sang an oftquoted song which shows his courage and his firm faith in Lord Siva. The gist of it is as follows: "We are subject to none. We will not fear Yamā, the god of death; nor suffer torture in hell. We do not lead a false life. We live happily. We know of no disease. Never will we bow down to others. There is always happiness; but no sorrow. Lord Siva, the supreme, is not subject to anyone. To that Supreme being we have surrendered and taken shelter at His feet."<sup>17</sup> The opening line, "To none we are subject" became a magic word in the mouth of patriots at the time of freedom struggle in Tamil Nadu.

In another *Tiruttāṇṭakam*, Tirunāvukkaracar brings out the omnipotence of God.

Who will not dance, if you make them dance?

(according to your wish)

Who will not be controlled, if you control them?

Whose heart will not be melted, if you melt it?

Who will not sing (thy praise) if you

make them sing?  
 Who will not bow down, if you make them bow?  
 Who will not see, if you make them see?  
 If you don't show, who will be able to see,  
 Oh Lord Siva.<sup>18</sup>

Tirunāvukkaracar's devotional songs reveal his profound humility, self-effacement and devotion. There are no emphatic words in Tirunāvukkaracar's *Tēvāram* as in Nāṇacampantar's devotional songs. Though Tirunāvukkaracar was a man of great intellect, and a philosopher, he regarded his sister's manual service to the temple as a noble one. He himself did such manual service in the temples. With a hoe in his hand, he went round the shrines clearing the weeds, grass and prickles growing inside the precincts. While rendering such service in temples, he composed hymns revealing his intellectual clarity and profound philosophical outlook. "In the farming land of truth the seed of 'interest' must be sown; the weeds like 'lie' must be removed; and the seed watered with patience. Light or sunshine has to come from within from an inward look. Such a farm must be fenced with *caṇmārkka* or the eclectic philosophy. If one pursues this golden path steadily, one will reap the harvest of Sivahood."<sup>19</sup> If one sets sail on the ocean of life, with the help of 'mind' as a boat, 'intellect' as oars, 'anger' as load, it might crash into the rocks of 'arrogance'. While sinking there won't be clarity of mind. Oh Lord Siva! at that time offer me the clear vision to pine for your grace and to attain salvation."<sup>20</sup> He has given us such songs of philosophical import.

Once while Tirunāvukkaracar was proceeding on a journey to Mount Kailās, he heard a command from God, that he should take a dip in a nearby tank. When he immersed into the water he saw the scene of Mount Kailās. Besides he came out miraculously from a tank at Tiruvaīyāru. At that time he realized God's reign of love in all the living beings. The substance of the hymn that he sang at that moment is as follows: "I followed those who were carrying water and flower and singing the praise of Siva and Pārvati. Even without treading the path, I reached Tiruvaīyāru. Then I saw a he-elephant and a love-laden she-elephant approaching me. In that fine spectacle I saw the sacred feet of Lord Siva. I had a marvellous vision of God."<sup>21</sup> He always sang in this vein, seeing

god as the universal Father and Mother in every bird and beast in this world.

During Tirunāvukkaracar's time there was a Brahmin, Appūti Aṭikaḷ, living at Tiṅkaḷūr, who worshipped him as his God. Nāvukkaracar's name was a *mantra* to him. So influenced was he by Tirunāvukkaracar that he not only named a *dharmasala* run by him after him but also named his sons after him. Tirunāvukkaracar was a Veḷḷāla by birth. However without looking into caste considerations, Appūti worshipped him as a God. This reveals that the Nāyaṇmārs cared little for caste differences in life.

Tirunāvukkaracar is believed to have sung several thousand hymns, but now only 3066 are available.

### Cuntarar

Cuntarar's life history is very interesting too. He belonged to the eighth century A.D. and was a Brahmin by birth. According to legend his parents arranged a marriage for him according to the family customs, but it was stopped by Siva. However, later with the help of Siva himself, he married two women, Paravaiyār and Caṅkiliyār. The former belonged to a clan of concubines while the latter belonged to a Veḷḷāla family. He led a happy family life and at the same time emerged as a great saiva saint. He too sang several devotional songs of which only 1026 are now available. Cuntarar mentions in a song "Oh Lord you are the sheet-anchor of my lady love Paravaiyār and me."<sup>22</sup> He always dressed himself like a bridegroom, enjoyed the pleasures of worldly life and glorified the grace of Siva in his songs. Ideas regarding renunciation and life negation are rare in his hymns. All his hymns like Tiruñānacampantar's *Tēvāram* possess a pleasant music and a pleasing rhythm. Cuntarar, like Campantar described the many shrines in their beautiful scenic settings. It was his habit to sing and ask for his mundane requirements from Siva. However he detested and sang against the poets who approached the houses of rich men for favours. Cuntarar exhorts in many poems that instead of relying on mortal men for favours, however rich they might be, poets should depend on Siva for eternal grace. The substance of the following poems emphasise this fact clearly:

Instead of praising and depending on miserly rich men, who lead a false life, for favours sing the praise of the abode of Siva, for food, clothing

and all other necessities of this life. You will live a life free of difficulties; you will also attain salvation. There is no doubt about it.

Cuntarar gives in a *patikam* a piece of sound advice to poets. He tells them not to compare a coward to Bhima or Arjuna. "Even if a miser is compared to Pāri, known for his munificence in the *Caṅkam* age, he may not offer them anything. It is equally futile to compare an old, infirm rich man to a youth with strong, firm and huge shoulders. It is worthless to call a vicious, ruthless, sinful and bad person, a man of sterling qualities. Do not waste your time in paying tribute to a miser as a munificent person and an illiterate as a literate. Instead spend your time gainfully in chanting the name of Siva."<sup>23</sup>

### Devotional Love

(Mystic state of love or Devotee's Love of God):

In Saivite cannon Tiruṇāṇacampantar, Tirunāvukkaracar, Cuntarar and Mānikkavācakar are referred to as the four Nāyaṇmars. Among them Mānikkavācakar, following the literary tradition of the *Caṅkam* literature composed an independent work entitled *Tirukkōvaiyār* on the *akam* theme. All the four hundred poems in the work speak about the devotees' mystical love for Siva. There are many individual devotional songs on the theme of mystical love in the works of the other three Nāyaṇmārs. In such devotional songs the devotee imagines himself as the love-lorn lady pining for love (grace) of Siva. In the traditional love poems, it is a common feature for the heroine to send natural objects as messengers to her lover. This type of poem is called *tūtu*. If the bee happens to be a messenger the poem is known as *vaṇṭṭuviṭutūtu*. Following this *akam* tradition, Nāṇacampantar imagined himself as a love-lorn lady and sent the bee as a messenger to inform Siva of his pathetic condition. The substance of the poem is as follows: "Oh bee! After tasting the honey from the lotus, grown in the pond, you are buzzing around happily with your lover. Will you not take pity on me and go as a messenger to my lover Siva and inform him at least once about my languishing condition?"<sup>24</sup>

Likewise Tirunāvukkaracar also depicts in a poem the condition of a heroine who was transformed by her godly love thus:

Once she heard His name. She learnt  
all about His features too. She came to



know to Ārur, the place where His shrine  
is located. She was madly in love with  
him. From that day onwards she abandoned  
her parents, and all the mundane duties.  
She forgot her own self, her name too.  
She became one with her Lord.<sup>25</sup>

Cuntarar also composed many devotional songs on the *akam* theme. In all these devotional love poems of Nāyanmārs, one can notice the impact of the *Caṅkam* literary tradition.

### *Tiruvācakam*

Maṇikkavācaṅkar who belonged to the eighth century, sung many devotional poems in praise of Siva. These poems are known as *Tiruvācakam*. He composed another book of poem, known as *Tirukkōvaiyār*. All the four hundred poems in the work are based on various aspects of love theme. In these poems the author conceived God as the bridegroom and himself as the bride. However the six hundred and fifty poems in *Tiruvācakam* alone attained the distinction of devotional songs. Since the poems of *Tiruvācakam* have the unique quality of moving the reader's mind, there is a proverb which says that "those who are not moved by *Tiruvācakam* will never be moved by other poem." This devotional work, in fact captivated the mind of the English missionary G.U. Pope, who came to render religious service in the Tamil country. He translated it into English.

Manikkavācaṅkar, who was a minister of the Pāṇḍya king, came under the spell of Siva. He sang with devotion many ecstatic songs which came to be sung daily with devotion and rapture in the homes of the Śaivites. The substance of one of the songs is as follows:

Many adore that on your plaited hair  
flows the river Ganges, that you ride on  
an ox and that you are the God of gods.  
When such adorations are heard by your  
devotees, they are enraptured and lose  
their balance like the water that flows  
into a ditch. When such great devotees  
are there you have cared to take possession  
of me. Since you are so merciful, my

heart's love should permeate my whole body from head to foot and pine for your grace. Likewise my eyes should pervade the body and shed a flood of joyful tears. But being a sinner, my heart only remains like a stone unmoved; and my two eyes lose their feeling and remains like trees without shedding joyful tears on hearing the rapturous outpourings of the devotees in praise of Siva.<sup>26</sup>

Mānikkavačakar, who has sung such soul-stirring devotional songs, utilised various forms of folk songs popular among the people of his day to sing the praise of Siva. He particularly selected various forms of folk songs sung by girls while playing games. Mānikkavācakar selected them so that the girls could use these devotional songs instead of others while at play. Verses in the following *patikams* like *tiruvammānai*, *tirupporcuṇṇam*, *tirukkōttumpi*, *tirutteḷḷēṇam*, *tiruttolnōkkam*, *tiruccāḷal*, *tirukkōvalli*, *tirupponṇūcal* are classic examples of the then popular folk songs. *Ammānai* is sung while playing the ball game in a sitting posture. Likewise *porcuṇṇam* is sung while pounding the fragrant flour. In the same manner *pōvaḷḷi* is sung while plucking flowers. *Ūcal* is a swing-song. Others like *tumpi*, *teḷḷēṇam*, *tōnōkkam* and *cāḷal* refer to games played by young girls.

### *Pāvaippāṭal*

Girls of marriageable age sing devotional songs in the Tamil month of Mārkaḷi. These songs are known as *Pāvaippāṭal*. It has been the custom among the girls during this month to wake up other girls in the early hours of the morning, have a bath in a tank and thereafter install the image of goddess Lakshmi in the form of a doll and pray to her for the prosperity of their country and for their happy marriage. At the time of the Bhakti movement this custom merged with the worship of the Supreme. The female Vaiṣṇava saint Āṇṭāl's *Tiruppāvai* and Mānikkavācakar's *Tiruvempāvai* belong to this category. *Tiruppāvai* extols the greatness of Viṣṇu and *Tiruvempāvai* speaks about Siva.

Young unmarried girls wake up in the early hours of the morning. They go to wake up their friends who are still in sleep. The *pāvaippāṭal* begins like a conversation between the girls.

“Are you still sleeping, as if you have not heard our song, sung in praise of the Lord who has no beginning or end? Are you deaf?”, asks one of the maidens. Another maiden adds, “Our friends’ state is rather curious. When she has heard the song glorifying the feet of our Lord in the street, she has cried in joy, forgotten herself, fallen out of the bed and has been unconscious on the floor. What a wonder is it?” Māṇikkavācakar’s *Tiruvempāvai* begins as a conversation between two maidens who go to wake up their friends.

Oh maids! are you still sleeping?  
 Though you have heard our  
 song of praise to our Lord, who  
 has no beginning or end.  
 When she heard the story, in praise  
 of the Lord echoing the streets  
 she has cried in rejoice, lost herself  
 and remained in stupor in her bed.  
 It has been her condition.  
 What an astonishing state is it?<sup>27</sup>

Āṇṭāl’s *Tiruppāvai* begins in the following manner:

Oh young maidens of Āyarpāṭi, come for  
 bathing on a fullmoon day in the month  
 of Mārkaḷi. Nantakōpaṇ’s son, as well  
 as Yacōtai’s young lion, who is called  
 by several names as Kaṇṇaṇ and Nārāyaṇaṇ  
 will give us a drum to celebrate the  
 Pāvai festival. Therefore, let us have our  
 ritual bath, and be praised by the world.  
 Oh maidens come.<sup>28</sup>

Likewise there are many poems in Āṇṭāl’s *Tiruppāvai*, which portray the maidens waking those in sleep and asking them to join in the bath. Both Māṇikkavācakar and Āṇṭāl give a description of the rain in their *pāvaippāṭals*. The following description of rain appears in Māṇikkavācakar’s *Tiruvempāvai*. “The cloud that goes up in the sky after absorbing water in the sea appears black like Umā Devi; emits lightning like her slender waist; thunders like her anklets; makes rainbow like her curved eye-brows and rains copiously like her eternal mercy.”<sup>29</sup> A similar description of rain

appears in Antal's *Tiruppāvai* also. "Oh clouds, don't conceal your water, go up the sky after sucking water from the sea. Turn black like Tirumāl, shed lightning like the wheel in his hand, thunder like his conch and rain profusely like the arrows that jets out from his bow. Rain for the prosperity of the entire world. We will also happily have our bath in the month of Mārkaḷi to perform our *pāvai* rituals."<sup>30</sup> Another poem in *Tiruppāvai* enumerates the ways in which the country will prosper.

Both *Tiruppāvai* and *Tiruvempāvai* became popular during the period of the Imperial Cōlas, who ruled South India from the ninth to the twelfth century A.D. When the Cōla king Rājeñdran (1014–1044 A.D.) captured Kaṭāram the Tamils settled down there. (Kaṭāram is perhaps the present day Kedah on the west coast of West Malaysia.) It is perhaps through them that the *pāvai* poems have spread to Thailand or Siam. For several centuries the Siamese have been celebrating a festival known as *triyempāva-tripāva*, without knowing its actual significance. During this festival they recite like mantras the corrupted forms of the poems of *Tiruvempāvai* and *Tiruppāvai*. This attests to their popularity even in such distant countries in those ancient periods.

### *Periyālvār*

Except the first three Ālvārs, all the rest belonged to the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries A.D. Their devotional songs numbering four thousand sung in praise of Tirumāl have come down to us in a compiled form, known as the *Nālāyita-tiyap-praa-pantam*. Among the twelve Ālvārs, it was Periyālvār who imagined Kaṇṇaṇ as a child and composed devotional songs. Kaṇṇaṇ's birthday celebrations are described in ten verses. There are another ten verses in which the neighbours are called upon to enjoy Kaṇṇaṇ's physical beauty, by copiously describing his toes, thighs, navel, stomach, chest, shoulders, hands, neck, mouth, eyes, eye-brows, ear-rings, forehead and hair. The following paraphrase of a poem invites the women to see Kaṇṇaṇ's beautiful feet:

Devaki is like the nectar, that came out  
of the ocean. She gave away Kaṇṇaṇ (for safety) to  
Yacōtai, the lady with a beautiful plaited hair. Oh  
maidens with coral lips, come and see Kaṇṇaṇ  
sucking the toes of his lotus-like feet.<sup>31</sup>

Another ten poems are "cradle songs", which describe how the child Kaṇṇaṇ is lulled to sleep. The subsequent songs of this genre owe their origin to Periyālvār. Likewise his poems on the child Kaṇṇaṇ paved the way for the emergence of *piḷḷaittamiḷ* or poems in praise of children in the body of Tamil literature. He composed ten poems each on themes such as, inviting the moon to play with the child; *ceṅkīrai āṭutal* or asking the child to sway its head (the term *ceṅkīrai* is in fact a stage in a child's life when it can turn to prostrate position, lifts up its head and tries to move hither and thither); requesting the child to clap its hands; to walk about; mother entreating the child to embrace her; the child embraces the mother; both play hide and seek, calling the child for breast feed; ear-boring ceremony; oil bath; engaging the child's attention while combing its hair; the mother calls the crow; requesting the child to bring a stick to herd the cows; calling the child to adorn its hair with flowers; performing certain rituals to protect the child from evil eyes; neighbours' complaints about the child's pranks; and the mother's distress. Only ten among the above mentioned themes are chosen by later day poets to correspond to the ten stages in the growth of a child. For each stage ten songs are composed. A work that describes the different stages in a child's life in hundred poems is known as *piḷḷaittamiḷ*. Up to this century many *piḷḷaittamiḷ* works have been written. They are appreciated for their literary grace. This genre has been utilised to compose devotional poems on gods as well as panegyrics in honour of kings and sages.

It is one of the enjoyable activities of a mother to put the baby in a cradle and lull it to sleep with a song. Those lullabies are regarded as the poetic compositions of housewives from time immemorial. Periyālvār's ten poems that begin with "māṇikkam kaṭṭi" and Kulacēkarālvār's ten poems that begin with "maṇṇu-pukaḷ" are the oldest extant cradle songs in Tamil literature. It should be remembered that these songs are about twelve centuries old.

Periyālvār's cradle songs run thus:

Siva has sent you these strings of beads  
and garlands of flowers. Oh Kaṇṇā! you  
have bestowed your grace on me. Don't cry,  
Kaṇṇā sleep! Varuṇaṇ has sent pearls,  
corals and bangles cut out from conch as  
suitable presents to you. Whereas Tirumakaḷ

has given garlands of *tuḷaci* leaves and the heavenly *karpakam* flowers. The goddess of earth has sent such ornaments as *maṇiccutti* and golden flower to be worn on your head. Sleep without crying, Kaṇṇā!<sup>32</sup>

With loving care  
Brahma has sent  
that cradle of gold  
Inlaid with ruby and diamond  
Oh! as the great dwarf  
You measured the universe, sleep.<sup>33</sup>

Kulacēkarālvār possessed an abiding devotion for Rama, one of the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. Therefore in his poems, Rama's remarkable achievements are described in the following manner. "You were born to Kōcalai; you destroyed the crowns of Rāvaṇa; your arrow sucked the strength of Tāṭakai; you were the son-in-law of king Janakaṇ and bestowed the throne on your younger brother and departed to the forest." The Ālvār after narrating Rama's valour, concludes the 'cradle song' beseeching Rakavaṇ to sleep.

That renowned Kōcalai, has given birth  
to you. You have destroyed the crowns  
of the king of Laṅka. You are the pre-  
siding deity of Kaṇapuram, the temple  
surrounded by walls decorated with gold;  
you are the pupil of my eye; my nectar,  
Oh Rākava, sleep!<sup>34</sup>

These cradle songs of the Ālvārs are sung in the *nīlampuri* tune.

Periyālvār was attracted to Krishna, one of the incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. Kaṇṇaṇ's boyhood pranks became so intolerable to his neighbours that they complained to his mother, Yacōtai. Then she called back her son and said, "Oh Kaṇṇa, come here. Don't give room for complaints, come back." The neighbours' complaint against Kaṇṇaṇ's behaviour and Yacōtai's appeal to him are narrated by Periyālvār in a dramatic manner. The following soul stirring poems were composed by him in the seventh or the eighth century A.D.

"After stealing and eating the butter, he throws the empty vessel on a rock and enjoys the sound it produces. We are unable to prevent this mischievous play. Oh Yacōtai, you have given birth



to a boy, capable of pranks which are like pouring tamarind juice on a wound. Call back your son."<sup>35</sup> This was the complaint of neighbours. "Come back, come back, Kaṇṇaṇ, come back. I am unable to bear the slighting words of our neighbours. Come here." Yacotai calls Kaṇṇaṇ home.<sup>36</sup>

"Oh Yacōtai! I asked my daughter to look after the milk which was kept on the oven. Then I went to my neighbour to fetch some fire for the oven. I spent some time speaking to them. Before I could return, Kaṇṇaṇ drank all the milk that was kept on the oven. Please call him back to you."<sup>37</sup> This was a complaint of one of the neighbours. "Kaṇṇā! come back, come back. Don't say you won't return. Come back, without being adamant. I don't like to hear others to utter lies and speak ill of you. My son, Kaṇṇā, come back." This was the mother's appeal to her son.<sup>38</sup>

"I placed the pan-cakes (made out of sugarcane juice), *cītai* (a savoury made out of rice and pea-flour), sesame balls, into a vessel and left it in my home. Your son came, and ate them all. He also went to the kitchen to search for butter. He did many other things but I told only a few. Oh Yacōtai, call back your son,"<sup>39</sup> complained another neighbour. "Oh Yacōtai, your son came to my house, called my daughter, removed the bangles from her hands and bartered them for *nāval* fruits, sold by a fruit-seller at the backyard. When he asked him, 'Why did you do so?' he denied with a broad smile, though the *nāval* fruits were in his hand."<sup>40</sup> This is another complaint of the neighbour.

"Oh Kēcavā, Kaṇṇā, come back. Don't refuse to come back. Never play in the houses of those neighbours who have no love for you. Don't go to places where men and women deliberately speak ill of you. It's right that you listen to mother's words. Come back, Kaṇṇā",<sup>41</sup> said Yacōtai.

Periyālvār composed many poems which relate Kaṇṇaṇ's pranks, and the complaints of shepherdesses to Yacōtai. "Kaṇṇaṇ stole and ate butter, curd and milk from the houses of shepherdesses. When they learnt of his mischief, they caught hold of him and tied him to a mortar a whole day. He was whipped, and therefore the whole day he cried."<sup>42</sup>

While we were swimming in the river, Kaṇṇaṇ threw mud on us, took possession of our bangles and clothes, ran away with more than the speed

of wind and hid himself in the house. When we asked for our garments and jewels he refused to speak. He was dumb the whole day.<sup>43</sup>

The poems, which extol Yacōtai's love for Kaṇṇaṇ are very moving. Yacōtai sent her son to the forest to tend the cows. Later, she regretted sending him alone to the forest.

Smearing turmeric, he was going hither and thither with the girls of Āyarpāṭi (living quarters of the shepherd folk). He destroyed the houses made of sand, and played many tricks on them. To prevent his annoying pranks I have sent him to the forest infested with hunters, to tend the cows. Why did I send him to the forest? Why did I make such a decision?<sup>44</sup>

Though I am Kaṇṇaṇ's mother, I have sent him to the forest to herd the cattle without thinking that his legs would ache. What a cruel thing I have done!<sup>45</sup>

I have sent him to the forest to tend the cattle, neither providing him with an umbrella nor a pair of slippers. Never did I think that his tender feet would be hurt if he treaded on the stony pathway leading to the forest. What a cruelty I have done <sup>46</sup>

In another *patikam*, Periyālvār portrays the happiness of Yacōtai, when Kaṇṇaṇ returns from the forest with the cattle. "Oh ladies, come and witness the marvel of my son's arrival from the forest. In this world I am the one who has given birth to such a beautiful son."<sup>47</sup> After welcoming Kaṇṇaṇ, Yacōtai says, "How cruel I am to send you to the forest to herd the cattle. No other woman would even have such a stony heart. Come, Kaṇṇā, give me a kiss."<sup>48</sup> "Your body is covered with dust. I have kept water for your bath. Finish your bath and eat. Your father has not eaten yet. He has been waiting for you."<sup>49</sup> "Kaṇṇā! Rice and other things are ready for the ritual, which is to be performed in seven days. I have invited the girls to come and prepare the sprouts and bless you. From tomorrow onwards you need not tend the cattle. You

remain in the house well dressed.”<sup>50</sup> These poems reveal Yacōtai’s motherly love.

Some *patikams* extol Kaṇṇan’s ability as a flutist, shepherdesses, love for him and Yacōtai’s reluctance to breast-feed him after witnessing his miracles. The oldest Indian literature, which portrays the incarnation of Krishna with love and devotion is found in Periyālvār’s devotional poems written in about the eighth century A.D.

### Āṇṭāl

Āṇṭāl was Periyālvār’s adopted daughter. Her compositions, which come down to us as *Tiruppāvai*, is regarded as one of the most famous devotional songs in Tamil. This is an extraordinary devotional work, which shows Āṇṭāl’s perceptive ability to imagine the environs of Āyarpāṭi, the shepherdesses as well as her own position among them. In the month of Mārkaḷi, *Tiruppāvai* is sung in the Vaiṣṇavite temples and homes even today in Tamil Nadu. The following is a paraphrase of one of the *pāvai* poems.

Thrice a month, there will be rain, if  
one were to sing about Tirumāl, who once  
measured the universe assuming a universal  
figure, and to perform the pāvai  
ritual. The fish will jump hither and  
thither in the rice fields among the  
luxuriant paddy. After drinking honey,  
the bees sleep in the midst of lotus  
flowers. The cows in the shed when milked,  
yield pots and pots of milk. Our prayers  
will improve the riches of the country.<sup>51</sup>

Āṇṭāl’s *Nācciyār Tirumoli* is also an excellent devotional poem. Since she possessed such a divine love towards Tirumāl, she was able to declare. “I will die, if I were to marry a human being.”<sup>52</sup> She composed the poem “Vāraṇamāyiram,” based on a dream of her marrying Tirumal.<sup>53</sup> This enchanting poem is recited even today during marriages among the Vaiṣṇavites.

Among Āṇṭāl’s devotional songs, many know *Tiruppāvai* by heart. Besides the Tamils, the Andhraites and the Kannāḍas have transliterated *Tiruppāvai* in their languages and recite it with dev-

otion. Commenting on the significance of *Tiruppāvai*, Periyavāccān Piḷḷai, one of the commentators of the *Nālāyiraṭivvīyap-prapantam* said, “Āḷavārs realized the Supreme, only when He awakened them from their slumber of wordly life and revealed Himself to them. Whereas Āṇṭāl woke up the Supreme and made known her distress. Therefore she is admired more than the other Āḷvārs.”<sup>54</sup> Further, Pillai adds, “since love between a man and a woman is more natural than between two men, Āṇṭāl’s loving devotion to Viṣṇu is more delectable than that of the male-Āḷvārs.”<sup>55</sup> Ramanujar, who was regarded as the foster mother of Sri Vaiṣṇavism showed no small interest in *Tiruppāvai*. Because of his interest in it he is praised as ‘Tiruppāvai Jiyar’.

The Vaiṣṇavaitees regard that the Āḷvārs’ concept of devotion to the Supreme is far superior to the realisation achieved through austerities. Sri Vēṅkaṭanāṭaṇ, popularly known as Vetanta Desikar, has declared that he could understand the inner meaning of Vedānta only by the knowledge gained through his study of Āḷvārs, devotional poems.

The poems of *Tiruppāvai* reveal that Āṇṭāl was oblivious of her surroundings for she imagines herself as one of the women shepherds of North Madura where Kaṇṇaṇ grew up. Her imagination has a touch of realism when as part and parcel of the clan, she performs their rites, rituals and penances. In *pāvai* poems, she assumes the role of the harbinger of dawn, waking up Nantakōpaṇ Yacōtai, Palatēvaṇ and Kaṇṇaṇ himself. One of the poems of the *Tiruppāvai* runs in the following manner: “Oh my master Nantakōpa, known for munificence, wake up! Oh my master’s wife Yacōtai, the light of the family and a model for all women, wake up! The Supreme, who had measured the universe don’t sleep, wake up! Oh Palatēvā, you and your brother Kaṇṇaṇ don’t sleep any more, wake up.”<sup>56</sup> Another poem in *Tiruppāvai* exhorts Nappiṇṇai, the daughter-in-law of Nantakōpaṇ, to wake up.<sup>57</sup>

Poems other than the *Tiruppāvai*, exhibit realistic human emotions. Since Āṇṭāl was in love with Tirumāl she was curious to know all about him. She addresses the conch, which is very close to Tirumāl’s lips, to find out the sweetness of his mouth.

With eagerness I ask  
How does Mātavaṇ’s mouth  
Smell and taste?

Oh, the white conch tell me.  
Does it smell like a lotus flower?  
Do the coral lips  
Taste sweet?  
Tell me, Oh conch!<sup>58</sup>

### *Tirumaṅkai Ālvār*

Tirumaṅkai Ālvār was known for his scholarship. He had considerable influence over the kings of the day and rendered religious service. Many of his devotional songs are composed on the traditional love theme. One type of poem, known as *maṭal* tells the disappointed lover's threat that he would make a horse out of the prickly palm scales, affix his lady love's portrait on it and fast unto death. The *Caṅkam* literary tradition avers that only the hero could pose these threats but not the heroine. Tirumaṅkai Ālvār changed this tradition in his love poems. He imagined himself as a lady deeply in love with Tirumāl. When Ālvār's efforts to win over Him failed he threatened to immolate himself on the palm scales. He composed two types of *maṭal* poems—*ciriyamaṭal* and *periyamaṭal*. In both the types, the heroine's threat forms the subject matter of the poems. The heroine says in one of the *maṭal* types of poems, "There is a tradition in Tamil literature that only the heroine has no prerogative to immolate herself on the palm scales. I reject this. The northern tradition permits woman also to immolate herself."<sup>59</sup> Like the Saiva hymnodist Mānikkavācakar, Tirumaṅkai Ālvār also utilised certain types of folk music for songs relating to the games played by girls such as the *cālal*. There are other types of folk songs in which the heroine would entreat birds like the cuckoo to sing for the arrival of her lover. Another kind of folk song is based on the belief of the people of the Tamil country. The chirpings of the lizard has always been regarded by the Tamil as an indication of a guest's visit to the house. Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, sings "Oh little lizard, you chirp to indicate Tirumāl's visit." One of Tirumaṅkai Ālvār cuckoo songs is as follows:

Oh kuyil! call Him!  
Call Maṇivaṇṇaṇ to come  
Call Him, who had protected  
The shepherds from the wrath of the rain god and  
Destroyed the demon, in disguise.<sup>60</sup>

His song entreating the lizard to announce the arrival of Kaṇṇaṇ is as follows:

Oh Lizard, chirp  
Chirp, and call Mātavaṇ  
Call Him, who had danced  
And scanned the universe.<sup>61</sup>

Tirumaṅkai Ālvār composed many poems on love themes, following the tradition of *akam* poems in the *Caṅkam* literature. In *Caṅkam* literature, the heroine used to send some birds and beasts as envoys to the hero. Following this tradition, Tirumaṅkai Ālvār also sent the bee and the stork as his envoys to Tirumāl to ask for His divine love. These love poems are interesting to read, "Oh stork, no other help will give me more enjoyment than to convey my love to Tirumāl. In return, I will offer this fertile region, where fish are available in abundance. After this you could come along with your beloved and live happily in the world."<sup>62</sup> There are other poems on the same love theme composed like the spoken words of a mother worried about her love-lorn daughter and the words of a *kaṭṭuvicci* (shaman) who could find out the causes and symptoms of the heroine's illness. These devotional poems based on the theme of love are known for their literary beauty.

### *Kulacēkarar*

Despite his heritage, Kulacēkarar Ālvār had little regard for wealth or even for his high birth as a human being in a royal family. Given to ardent devotion to Tirumāl, Kulacēkarar preferred to be born at Tirumalai, the abode of Tirumāl, even as a bird. He sang thus:

I do not want to rule the kingdom  
of Heaven or earth surrounded by  
beautiful women. I will be happy to  
be born as a fish in the brooks of  
Tiruvēṅkaṭam, the abode of Tirumāl.<sup>63</sup>

Kulacēkarar sang in this vein ten soul-stirring poems. His only wish was to be born at Tiruvēṅkaṭam (Tirupati Hills) as a cliff, or



a mountain creek, or a step or for that matter anything so long he was close to Tirumāl's abode. All these ten poems reveal his fervent devotion to God. Another ten poems composed at the shrine of Vittuvakkōṭu, contain many interesting similes. They also reveal his religious fervour as well as his skill as a literary artist. Here is a summary of some of the poems in that *patikam*. "Oh Lord, I have no other abode except your feet. Like a child that yearns for the love of its departed mother I have always craved for your love. Like a family woman's devotion to her despicable husband, I always possess a blind devotion to you. Like a patient's unshakeable faith in his surgeon, who had operated his wound causing severe pain, I have firm faith in you. Like a bird which returns inevitably to the mast of a ship after failing to find the shore in the midst of the sea, I always return to your feet for safety. Like the lotus that blooms facing the burning sun, I always look up to you for salvation. Like the crops that look up to the clouds for rains, though delayed a long time, I have been constantly expecting your grace."<sup>64</sup> With such apt similes, Kulacēkarar is able to bring out his adamant devotion to Tirumāl.

Since Kulacēkarar Ālvār was fascinated by Rāmāvatāram, he sang the entire story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in an abridged form in one *patikam* or ten poems. Pēriyālvār too sang the praise of Rāmā although he was a great admirer of Kṛṣṇa. In one *patikam*, Kulacēkarar narrates how Hanuman after reaching Sri Lanka met Sīta and gave Rāmā's description of his life with her. At the same time Hanuman's happiness after handing over Rama's ring to Sīta is also portrayed. Likewise Kulacēkarar Ālvār depicts movingly in one *patikam*, Tacarantaṇ's sorrow at Rāmā's departure to the forest on Kaikēyi's command. Other Ālvārs too in their songs speak of Rāmā's divine deeds and his graciousness. The devotional songs on Rāmā and Kṛṣṇa in the seventh and the eight centuries laid the foundation for the emergence of Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇa*. Although this monumental work is based on Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, it is no exaggeration to say that the concept of bhakti that one finds in Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇam* is derived from the Ālvārs' devotional songs.

Other devotees like Tiruppāṇālvār, Tirumaḷicaiyālvār and Toṇṭaraṭippotiālvār too sang the praises of Tirumāl in soul-stirring poems.

### Nammālvār

Nammālvār occupies a prime place among the twelve Vaiṣṇava saints of Tamil country. It was given to Maturakaviyālvār to sing his praise. Nammālvār's *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvācīriyam*, *Periyatiruvantāti*, *Tiruvāimoli* are regarded as the quintessence of the four Vedas. *Tiruvāimoli* is reckoned the greatest among his works. Since the work reveals Nammālvār's devotion to and realisation of the Supreme, it is considered as the repository of these two noble emotions. Many Vaiṣṇava scholars have written incisive and elaborate commentaries on it. These commentaries, known as *viyā-kyāṇaṅkal* in Tamil are preserved for generations as the most commendable philosophical treasures. The mere fact that they have been known by the number of letters used in them, such as *Mūvāyirappaṭi* (three thousand), *Onpatiṇāyirappaṭi* (nine thousand), *Pannīrāyirappaṭi* (twelve thousand), *Irupattu-nālāyirappaṭi* (twenty four thousand), *Muppattārāyirappaṭi* (thirty-six thousand) reveals the care with which they have been preserved all these years. *Tiruvāimoli* has become part of the life of Vaiṣṇavites. Particularly, the southern sect of Vaiṣṇavites, regard it greater than the *Vedas* themselves.

Besides the philosophical poems in *Tiruvāimoli*, there are also poems on the theme of divine love. Among the various types of divine love songs, *tūtu* finds an important place. *Tūtu* is a type of divine love poetry in which the devotees as heroine sends a message through a bird or an animal to God, who happens to be the hero. Following this tradition, Nammālvār too composed some soul-stirring *tūtu* poems in which a stork or a parrot is sent as a messenger. Besides thematic similarities we find many interesting lines borrowed from the ancient literary works. By virtue of this all the one thousand poems of *Tiruvāimoli* are appreciated by all sections of people, by the devotees of Viṣṇu, the philosophers and the poets.

As already mentioned, both the devotional as well as the literary elements can be seen from the following summaries of *tūtu* poems in *Tiruvāimoli*. "Oh the stork with a beautiful wing! What will you do if you are imprisoned along with your husband when you go as my messenger to my Lord, Tirumāl?"<sup>65</sup>

"Oh swans! won't you go as my messenger to Tirumāl? Won't you tell him, that a foolish lady is perturbed whether or not she will be absolved from past sins?"<sup>66</sup>

"Oh *akanril* birds! He doesn't know that it is unbecoming on his part to ignore the love-lorn lady. How would I convey my feelings of love through you? However you convey to Him, that none of the noble qualities will ever be with Him, if He were to forsake one pitilessly. Will you or will you not do this help for me."67

"Won't the Lord, who protects with mercy all the beings in the seven worlds, look after my interests also? Won't you birds, searching for food in the waterlogged fields convey my sorrow to him?"68

"As my sins accumulate so does dew condense in the chill northern wind and causes me sorrow. My Lord, Tirumāl has not showered His grace on me, thinking of my follies. Oh parrot, why can't you go and find out from Him what sin have I committed to bring Him disgrace."69

"Oh little parrot! Are you not my pet? I have entreated you several times to inform Tirumāl of my love-sickness. You have failed to convey my message. Now the sorrow has wasted my charm and beauty. I have lost the strength even to feed you. Better look for some one who could feed you."70

Nammālvār's poems on *akan* theme have devotional and literary merit. This we have seen in the foregoing passages. The heroine apostrophes to the birds and beasts reveal not merely her forlornness but her love of God. These same birds and beasts too suffer the pangs of love like the heroine. Some of the summaries of verses that follow reveal this.

"Oh stork! you perambulate in the rich groves of the seaboard—why don't you go to sleep, even though your mother land the Heaven have gone to sleep? Are you also overwhelmed with sorrow and pining, like me, who has fallen in love with Tirumāl?"71

"Oh the sharp-peaked *Anril* bird! Having lost your mind to Tirumāl, are you calling the name even during the midnight. Are you also craving like me for His *tuḷaci* garland?"72

"Oh the resounding ocean! without sleeping you have been thundering. Are you also pining for His love? Are you also undergoing the same agony as mine because of your love for Tirumāl's feet?"73

"Oh the cold North Wind! you loiter day and night over the sea, the mountain and the sky without sleep. You are like me in

this respect torturing yourself from time immemorial to see Tirumāl?"<sup>74</sup>

"Oh cloud! time immemorial you have been carrying the water and emptying it as rain on the world. In this process you too like me waste away your form. Are you also taken in by Tirumāl's glory and pine for his love?"<sup>75</sup>

"Oh the waning moon! Like me forlorn and lean, you are struggling to light the dark sky. Have you lost your beauty, relying on the false words of Tirumāl as truth."<sup>76</sup>

"Oh dusk! We have lost our hearts to Nārāyaṇā, but we do not know the way to recover it from Him. We know how to cry and repent for it. At a time we are pining for His love, you creep in and torture us. Oh dusk, how long will you prolong your torture?"<sup>77</sup>

"Oh deep lagoon! it looks as though you won't go to sleep even if the night and the day inadvertently change their course. Have you emaciated in your anxiety to gain His mercy?"<sup>78</sup>

"Oh the ever burning lamp! as we have been tortured by love-sickness, so you too are burning yourself to obtain the *tuḷaci* garland from our Lords."<sup>79</sup>

Some of the poems which are apostrophes of the love-lorn lady's mother, are known for their overpowering devotional element.

Sifting the sand, will say that  
it is Tirumāl's (who came in the form  
of a dwarf or Vāmaṇa to beg for three  
feet of land) earth. Praying to the  
sky she will show by the sign of her  
hand, that it is His abode, *vaikuntam*.  
Standing with eyes bedewed with tears,  
she will say that her lord possesses  
the colour of the sea. What will I do to  
Tirumal, who has captivated my daughter?<sup>80</sup>

The heroine's mother further says that her daughter is able to perceive Tirumāl in all the mundane things. "When she beholds the sea, she prays saying that my Lord sleeps on this sea. To her, fire is Tirumāl and therefore it does not burn her. She sees Tirumāl in the mountain and beseeches him to come to her. When rain pours down she dances, saying that 'Nārāyaṇā' has arrived. To her

a beautiful calf is in fact the one tended by Gōvindaṇ. She runs after a snake, saying that 'it is the bed of my Lord'. When she hears the rhythm of a dance, she runs in that direction thinking that it may be the dance of Gōvindaṇ. She is carried away by the flute song and considers it to be the music of her Lord. To her all the butter meant for sale, is in fact the butter consumed by her Lord. She considers all *tulaci* flowers as the garland of Nārāyaṇaṇ. She attempts to reach the dark clouds as if they are Kaṇṇaṇ himself. when she beholds a herd of cattle, she follows it hoping to have a glimpse of Kaṇṇaṇ in its midst."<sup>81</sup>

"She will be low in spirits. She will look around. She will heave a long sigh, eyes bedewed with tears. She will be weary of body. Again and again she will call out Kaṇṇā! At one time she will say 'My Lord has come!' What can I do for this love-lorn daughter?"<sup>82</sup> Such was the pathetic situation of the mother whose daughter was smitten with divine love.

During Nammālvār's time, the poverty-stricken poets used to approach philanthropists, praise them, and return happily with gifts given to them. Nammālvār was disgusted with the poets who sold their poetic talent for a pittance. But many poets belonged to this category because of their chill penury. If Nammālvār rebuked the poets, it went against the rich men. Nevertheless he felt, it was his duty to give a bit of his mind about their ignoble activity. He said,

I will not waste my poetic talents  
in singing the praise of mere mortals.  
So long my Lord is at Tirupati hills,  
I will not use my poetic talents in  
the praise of others.<sup>83</sup>

"What is the use of composing poems on an ordinary mortal, who thinks he is permanent and supreme and regards his wealth as perennial prosperity?"<sup>84</sup> "What is the use of singing the praise of an ordinary human being in superb poems? Oh poets, how long would you be able to live on charity?"<sup>85</sup> "What benefit is there in possessing wealth? It is conspicuous like the heaped up rubbish. Oh poets, by applauding the wealthy don't lose your true identity."<sup>86</sup> "You can live even by doing physical work. We have seen that there exists no philanthropist who could appreciate your poems

and reward them accordingly. Therefore sing the praise of your personal deity. That will reach Perumāl, my Lord."<sup>87</sup> "Don't praise the rich in hyperbolic language saying that his hands give alms like clouds (which give rain) or comparing his shoulders to mountains."<sup>88</sup> "I am not the poet to sing the praise of ordinary human beings."<sup>89</sup> One full *patikam* is devoted to criticise the absurdity of the poets who sing the rich. The Śaiva saint Cuntarar also expressed the same view about poets praising the rich for their wealth. Thus the devotional songs of Ālvār and Nāyanmārs were responsible for giving new hope and resurgence for the people in the country.

### *Change and Lucidity in Poems*

The body of ethical literature that arose between the *Caṅkam* and the Bhakti movement period should be set aside for obvious reasons, while evaluating the trend and growth of Tamil literature during the Bhakti movement period. It could be realised that Bhakti literature has grown by adopting the essential aspects of the *Caṅkam* literature. The *akam* poetry, which discusses the love of an unnamed hero and heroine, was modified to portray the devotees love of God in devotional literature. While the heroism of kings had been the theme for *puram* poetry, the God's miraculous deeds became the theme for Bhakti poetry. As the *Caṅkam* poems eulogize the munificence of philanthropists, so the devotional literature portrays the gracious acts of God. Description of nature formed the background for the love poems both in *Caṅkam* and Bhakti literatures. In the case of the former, the natural scenery of the meeting place of the chief characters will be described. Whereas in the latter the scenic beauty of the place where the temple is located will be described. As the description of nature forms part of the love poems in *Caṅkam* literature, the devotional poems of Tiruñānacampantar, Cuntaramūrtināyanār, Tirumaṅkaiālvār and others contain copious description of nature.

Despite these similarities, there exist a marked difference in the poetic form between the *Caṅkam* and the Bhakti poems. The *Caṅkam* literature is meant for the literary elite, whereas the Bhakti literature is for everyone, for the Bhakti movement originated as a mass movement. Therefore the style of devotional poems are not rigid like the *Caṅkam* poetry but extremely simple and pliable. As the devotional songs are meant for singing by a group of devotees in and around the temples it is composed in a set of rhythmic



metres. Consequently the stylistic simplicity as well as the rhythmic mellifluousness of Bhakti poetry, made it possible for a change in the form, content and mode of expression in Tamil poetical literature.

The epic *Cilappatikāram* paved the way for the Bhakti literature to effect this transformation in Tamil literature. It can be said that *Cilappatikāram* formed a bridge between the *Caṅkam* and the Bhakti literatures. The epic is known for its simplicity and melody. Both the human love that is described in the *Caṅkam* literature as well as the divine love that is found in the Bhakti literature are treated in the epic, *Cilappatikāram*. A description of devotee's love for the Supreme is found in *Āycciyar kuravai*, the seventeenth chapter in *Cilappatikāram*. The rulers' heroism and munificence, as well as the gods' miraculous dances and actions are described in the epic. Likewise, the love poems, the folk-songs as well as the devotional poems are found in the epic. The *Cilappatikāram* in fact paved the way for the growth of a Tamil poetry which would at once be simple in style and closer to the common man. The devotional hymns of both the Nāyanmārs and Ālvārs consummated this process of change.

Another important transformation that took place in the content of poems should be considered here. After the *Caṅkam* period, Jainism and Buddhism gained popularity in the Tamil country. As a result, importance was given to ascetic life rather than to domestic life. People despised mundane pleasures and prepared to lead a life which would guarantee them a place in Heaven. Fine arts like music, dance, painting and architecture lost their merit in society. Even during the period of extreme asceticism the epic *Cilappatikāram* gave equal importance to ascetic as well as family life and helped to bridge the gulf between them. In one breath it has spoken of the greatness of the ascetic as well as the domestic life. It emphasised the negation of life and at the same time praised fine arts. Only towards the end of the epic, emphasis is made that one should search for things that would be their companion in Heaven.<sup>90</sup> In all other places in the epic both the domestic and the ascetic ways of life are explained alternatively. Whereas in the devotional songs of the Ālvārs and the Nāyanmārs, neither the ascetic life is criticized nor the family life is despised. They have pointed out the transitory nature of life as well as the importance of fine arts. The Bhakti literature has given clarity, that by enjoying the legitimate pleasures

of the world, one could be devoted to God. It has eradicated from the minds of the people the fear of worldly life and encouraged them to perform collective prayer and lead a life of devotion. One of Tiruñāṇacampanatar's *Tēvārams* avers that people "could live a full life in this world."<sup>91</sup> Likewise Tirunāvukkaracar's *Tēvārams* explain the fundamental truth that all the pleasures of nature, the pleasure given by the objects in nature, and the pleasures derived from arts have their sources in the Supreme.

The Lord of Karukāvūr, is the tender  
shoot, the diamond, the day, the week,  
the planets, the nectar, the ghee in  
milk, the juice in fruits and the rhythm in  
music. Umai (His consort) forms part of  
His body. He is the power of speech for  
the tongue. He is the source of the world.  
He has existed before this world phenomenon.  
This Supreme is my father.<sup>92</sup>

Nammālvār perceived Kaṇṇaṇ in the food we eat, in the water we drink and in the betel-leaf we chew.<sup>93</sup> He advised his fellow beings that since the pleasures derived had their source in His eternal grace they should devotedly shed tears for His benevolence. The most important thing that one perceives in the devotional poems of the Ālvārs and the Nāyaṇmārs is devotion to the Supreme. And all other things such as likes and dislikes, principles and fears are pushed to the background.

The devotional poems of the Ālvārs and the Nāyaṇmārs brought about a revolution in society. They propagated the view that before God everyone is equal and that He alone is the leader of the people. Hence the view that Tamil which had been employed as an instrument to praise the kings and the rich people, should henceforth be exclusively used to sing the praises of God. The Ālvārs and the Nāyaṇmārs through their devotional outpourings gave faith to the people to approach the temples for solace instead of the palaces of the kings and the mansions of the rich.

During the Bhakti movement the Tamil term *kōyil* which had been used previously for the king's palace, came to be specifically used for the temples. Prior to the emergence of the Bhakti Movement, the tallest buildings in the country used to be the King's palaces. As a result of the mental revolution brought about by the

Bhakti poems, the importance changed from the palace to the temple. Instead of palaces, the temple kōpurams became the tallest structures in the country.

The religious leaders changed the habit of the singers in that they recited the *Tiruppaḷḷi-eḷucci* songs in temples instead of in palaces. Consequently even the king also woke up in the early hours of the morning to join the people in their morning prayers. Many of the palace festivals became the festivals of gods. These revolutionary changes augured well for setting aside the status and caste consciousness among the people.

### NOTES

1. T.M. Kumarakuruparaṇ Pillai (ed.), *Cuntarar Tēvāram, Tēvārūr Tiruppatikam* (Sri Vaikuntam, 1958), pm 10, pp. 148–49. (Abbreviation for *Cuntarar Tēvāram* is CT).
2. CT, *Tirukkōlakkā Tiruppatikam*, pm 8, p. 18.
3. T.M. Kumarakuruparaṇ Pillai (ed.), *Tirunāvukkaracar Tēvārām, Tiruvatikaivīraṭṭāṇam Tiruppatikam*, (Shri Vaikuntam, 1958), pm 6, pp. 443. (Abbreviation for *Tirunāvukkaracar Tēvārām* is TT).
4. Saiva Siddhanta Mahasamajam (ed.), *Tirumūlar Tirumantiram* (Madras, 1940), pm 272, p. 40. (Abbreviation for *Tirumūlar Tirumantiram* is TTM.)
5. TTM, pm 272, p. 40.
6. TTM, pm 1857, p. 264.
7. TTM, pm 2883, p. 409.
8. TTM, pm 1617, p. 230.
9. TTM, pm 145, p. 22.
10. P. Ramanathan Pillai (ed.), *Panniru Tirumurai Peruntirathi*, (1st edn), (Madras, 1961), pm. 2, p. 683.
11. Ibid., pm. 3, p. 683.
12. Mayilai Madhavadasan, *Nālāyira-tivviyap-pirapantam*, Revised edition, (Madras, 1962), pm 2182, p. 473. (Abbreviation for *Nālāyira-tivviyap-pirapantam* is NTP.)
13. NTP, pm 2357, p. 495.
14. T.M. Kumarakuruparaṇ Pillai (ed.), *Tiruñāṇacampanṭar Tēvārām, Tiruvaiyāru Tiruppatikam* (Shri Vaikuntam, 1961), pms 1, 7, and 8, pp. 225–27. (Abbreviation for *Tiruñāṇacampanṭar Tēvārām* is NT).
15. NT, *Tiruppiramapuram Tiruppatikam*, pm 1, pp. 137–38.
16. NT, *Kōlaru Tiruppatikam*, pm 1, pp. 752–53.
17. TT, *Maṟumāṟṟat Tiruttāṇṭakam*, pm 1, 1

18. *TT, Taṇit Tiruttāṇṭakam*, pm 3, pp. 619–20.
19. *TT, Taṇit Tirunēricai*, pm 2, p. 570.
20. *TT, Tiruvorṇiyūr Tiruppatikam*, pm 2, p. 532.
21. *TT, Tiruvaiyāru Tiruppatikam*, pm 1, p. 103.
22. *NT, Tirunākaikkārōṇam Tiruppatikam*, pm 11, p. 137.
23. *CT, Tiruppukalūr Tiruppatikam*, pms. 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 & 9, pp. 129–132.
24. Saiva Siddhanta Publisher (ed.), *Tirunanacampantar Tevaram*, 1st edn. (Madras. 1927), *Patikam* 60, pm. 1, p. 134.
25. *TT, Tiruvārūr Tiruttāṇṭakam*, pm 7, p. 355.
26. Tiruvāvaṭuturai Ātiṇam (ed.), *Tiruvācakam, Cuṭṭaruttal* (Tiruvav-  
atuturai, 1964), pm 1, p. 179 (Abbreviation for *Tiruvācakam* is *TM*.)
27. *TM, Tiruvempāvai*, pm 1, p. 429.
28. *NTP*, pm 474, p. 115.
29. *TM, Tiruvempāvai*, pm 16, p. 478.
30. *NTP*, pm 447, p. 116. (Henceforth all references to *NTP* will simply  
be mentioned in the following manner: 477 : 116. The former number  
refers to poem and the latter to page number.)
31. 23: 9.
32. 45, 46, 49, & 50: 13–14.
33. 44: 13.
34. 719: 172.
35. 202: 47.
36. 203: 47–48.
37. 206: 48.
38. 207: 48.
39. 210: 49.
40. 211: 49.
41. 209: 49.
42. 217: 51.
43. 213: 50.
44. 235: 55.
45. 241: 56.
46. 242: 56.
47. 244: 56.
48. 245: 56–57.
49. 246: 57.
50. 252: 58.
51. 476: 115.
52. 508: 125.
53. 556: 136.
54. Peria vacan Pillai's Commentary.
55. Peria vacan Pillai's Commentary.
56. 490: 119.

57. 491: 119.
58. 567: 137.
59. *NTP, Periya Tirumatal*, p. 550.
60. 1944: 431.
61. 1945: 432.
62. K. Venkatacamī Reddiyar (ed.), *Nalayira Tevviyappirapantam*, 1st edn. (Madras, 1973) pm 2078, p. 441.
63. 678: 164.
64. 688, 689, 691-94, : 165-66.
65. 2708: 564.
66. 2710: 565.
67. 2711: 565.
68. 2712: 565.
69. 2714: 565.
70. 2715: 565.
71. 2785: 577.
72. 2786: 577.
73. 2787: 577.
74. 2788: 577-578.
75. 2789: 578.
76. 2790: 578.
77. 2791: 578.
78. 2792: 578.
79. 2793: 578.
80. 3040: 621.
81. 3041-46 & 47: 621-22.
82. 3049: 623.
83. 2985: 610.
84. 2986: 610.
85. 2987: 610-11.
86. 2989: 611.
87. 2990: 611.
88. 2991: 611.
89. 2992: 611.
90. *Cilappatikāram*, C. 30, p. 637.
91. *NT, Tiruppiramapuram Tiruppatikam*, p. 1, pp. 137-38.
92. *TT, Tirukkarukāvūr Tiruttāṇṭakam*, pm 1, p. 188.
93. *NTP*, pm 3293, p. 669

## Different Types of Literary Works (A.D. 700–1300)

### *Nantik-kalampakam*

*Kalampakam* is one of the many literary types that were written during the middle ages. It was considered a novelty to write a work dealing with different themes. The *kalampakam* itself was written on many themes and in different types of poetry. However the entire work should be composed in one hundred poems in *antāti* form. In this genre of poetical composition the last line or the word or the foot or the syllable of the preceding poem will be the beginning of the following poem. As a result the entire work has the appearance of a garland or a chain. One of these *kalampakams* happens to be a poem in praise of Nantivarman, an important king of the Pallava dynasty. It is therefore known as the *Nantik-kalampakam*. It is remarkable for its vivid imagination and poetic excellence. In fact the style and beauty of the poems help one to ignore the hyperbolic treatment of the theme. To bring out the significance of the work, a story is cited. Although it has no historical basis, the story has gained currency because it explains the relevance of the work. One of King Nantivarman's enemies made several treacherous plans to kill him. When all his plans came to nothing, he composed a poetical work. It was supposed to contain certain lines and verses which when heard by Nantivarman would hasten his death. After the completion of the work the enemy entreated him to sit on a funeral pyre and listen



to it. Nantivarman agreed to do so because of his love for Tamil poetry. The poetic qualities of the work so captivated his heart that even after knowing the real intentions of the composer, Nantivarman refused to leave the pyre. When he heard the hundredth poem, the pyre caught fire and he died a tragic death. That illfated poem is noted for its poetic grandeur. It is as follows:

Oh King Nantivarama! You are the leader among men! The brightness of your face has reached the moon in the sky. Your worldwide fame has gone to the sea. Your heroism has fled to the tiger in the forest. The generosity of your hands has gone to the *karpaka* tree. The Goddess of wealth departing from you has joined her husband Tirumāl. The fire has consumed your body. Now where am I to take refuge with my poems.<sup>1</sup>

The *Nantik-kalampakam* clearly indicated the new trend in the growth of Tamil literature. There is novelty in the expression of ideas, as well as in the utilisation of poetic metre for the expression of various emotions. There is also newness in its style. Though the style is simple, it is full of life and expresses ideas with remarkable clarity.

### *Restrictions for Creative Literature*

Poems praising a person will be interesting only if they are composed in different metres. In such poems the poet should be the mouthpiece of various characters, revealing the greatness of the hero. If the hero happens to be a king, his greatness could be made known by the tributes of his subjects or by the pining words of a love-lorn lady or by the simple praise of a beggar or by the laudatory words of a soldier who takes pride in the hero's valour. Only then the work will appeal to the reader's interest. It is not known who the poet was who conceived the idea of compiling panegyrics, written in a variety of metres and on diverse themes on a single hero, into a new literary genre known as *kalampakam*. However the oldest work of this type happens to be the *Nantik-kalampakam* composed in honour of Nantivarman in the ninth century A.D. When some of the *kalampakams* became

popular the grammarians laid down rules for their composition. They mentioned the types of metres as well as the thematic subdivisions to employ in the composition of a *kalampakam*. According to them it should consist of eighteen parts, with a specific number of verses depending on the caste category of the hero. If the hero happens to be a god, a hermit, a king, a minister, a merchant, or a farmer a *kalampakam* should contain 100, 95, 90, 70, 50, and 30 verses respectively. It is strange that the grammarians should have thought of formulating rules to systematize the general characteristics of a particular literary work. Unfortunately they forgot that true literary work could not be bound by rules and that creative work required intelligence and imagination, not merely mechanical skill and could flourish only in an environment free from restrictions. It would not be proper to frame rules for literary works on the basis of caste or class. Fortunately none of the authors of *kalampakams* of a later origin ever followed these rules. They composed them according to their imagination, adding or deleting certain aspects of this genre. Contrary to the rules laid down by grammarians, apostrophes of women characters like *picciyār korriyār*, *itaicciyār*, *valaicciyār*, *kīraiyaṛ*, and *mōkiniyār* found a place in the later *kalampakams*. Likewise restrictions relating to verses were ignored. For example, the *Tirukkalampakam*, one of the oldest *kalampakams*, contains 110 verses, whereas the *Āḷuṭaiya Piḷḷaiyār kalampakam* contains only 49 verses. Many *kalampakams* were written by prominent poets like Irattai-pulavar, Kumarakurupar and Civappirakācar. Most of the *kalampakams* praise the deities of various shrines in the Tamil country. In them, although each verse treats of a different theme, it manages to relate and praise the main character, the deity along with its shrine, to maintain a continuity in the central theme of the work. As mentioned earlier, the verses are in *antāti* form giving the impression that the entire work is a necklace of colourful beads. In fact the hero's name and fame are the very stuff of the *kalampakam*.

In the medieval times it was regarded as a great skill to employ certain intricate types of figures of speech or jugglery of words such as *yamakam* (repetition of the same word throughout the verse or in a few lines of the verse with different meanings) in writing verses. Certain poets of that period vied with one another in introducing certain types of jugglery of word into the

*kalampakams*. However, since there was no poetic beauty in word jugglery, it later fell into disuse.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, *kalampakams* became a rarity. Even among the old ones, the *Nantik-kalampakam* alone is read for its poetic excellence. Certain *kalampakams* based on religious themes are read only by the respective religious adherents. In the last century Pūṇḍi Araṅganātha Mudaliar, distinguished for his English learning, evinced keen interest in *kalampakams* and wrote a work entitled *Kaccik-kalampakam*, eulogising the famous shrine at Kanchipuram.

### *Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci*

It was an age-old custom in the Tamil country for kings and leaders of men to rise at dawn to the strains of mellifluous music. It would be sung invariably by minstrels who visited their palaces and mansions. (This practice still exists in a modified form in Tamil Nadu, where in certain months some people go round the streets singing songs in the mornings.) In substance *tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* songs were akin to folk music and as such poets of those days composed poems based on folk music. During the *caṅkam* period, this poetic tradition of waking important personages in the early hours of the morning was known as *tuyileṭainilai*. In the medieval period, especially during the Bhakti Movement, this tradition received a new nomenclature, known as *tiruppaḷḷiyelucci*. The *tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* poems were written by Māṇikkavācakar and Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyālvār, the former being a Śaivite and the latter, a Vaiṣṇavite. Even today their poems are sung in a special tune known as *pūpaḷa rākam*, in both the Śiva and the Viṣṇu shrines respectively. Written in a specific metre, they have been upheld as works of great poetic merit by the later generations of poets such as Tattuvarāyar and Citampara Cuvāmikaḷ. At the beginning of this century, Pāratiyār also utilised the same metre to compose the *Pāratamātā Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci*.

Let us consider a few of these *tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* poems composed by the early hymnodists like Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyālvār and Māṇikkavācakar. Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiyālvār sings in the following manner:

The sun has dawned in the east. Darkness  
has receded; flowers have bloomed; gods and

kings have been waiting on you. Elephants  
and drums roar like the waves of the ocean.  
Oh the Lord of Srirangam, wake up.<sup>2</sup>

Māṇikkavācakar's poem runs thus:

Oh the Source of my life! The day has dawned.  
Your devotees have come with flowers to worship  
your feet. Expecting the gracious smile that  
adorns your face they have come to prostrate  
before you. Oh the Lord of Tirupperunturai,  
the possessor of a flag with an ox emblem,  
the possessor of my own self, wake up.<sup>3</sup>

In the eighteenth century the famous Advaita philosopher, Tattuvarāyar besides composing *tiruppāvai* and *paḷippāṭṭu* on the model of folk songs, wrote many *tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* works. Some of these include *Arul Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci*, *Civappirakāca Cuvāmika! Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci*, *Corūpāṇanta Cuvāmika! Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* and *Tattuvappirakāca Nāyaṇar Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci*. Containing ten verses each, they are similar in form, rhythm and content to the *tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* works written by the hymnodists. Likewise Citampara Cuvāmika!'s *tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* on Lord Murugaṇ also contains ten verses and their form and rhythm are bound by tradition. Though the name of the deity and the shrine vary from one *tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* to another, all other aspects remain the same in all of them. The following is the content of the first verse from *Pāratamātā Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* composed by poet Pāratiyār in the early part of this century.

Due to our prayers the day (of independence)  
has dawned. The sorrow of darkness (slavery)  
has vanished. Like knowledge that helps to  
clear the mind of its doubts, the sun has  
risen shedding its golden rays everywhere  
to help clear the darkness. Oh mother Bharatam,  
your devotees have gathered around you to  
offer their prayers. (In fact to take your  
orders) Oh mother country you are still  
asleep! Wake up (to see the determination  
of your people to free you from slavery).<sup>4</sup>

There has been little change in the form, lines and foot of *tirupalliyelucci* verses for the last twelve centuries. There is evidence to believe that even prior to the eighth century, this type of poems must have been in existence with similar features. Likewise even the subject matter such as the dawning of the day, the rising of the sun, persons waiting on their leaders to take instructions or receive favours, and their efforts to wake them up from sleep, would have been almost similar. The ending of the poem with an appeal "wake up" also indicates the uniformity that has been existing over the centuries in this particular genre of poetry.

### *Kōvai*

The panegyric work *Pāṇṭikkōvai* was written in honour of Neṭumāraṇ, a king of the Pāṇḍya dynasty. It belongs to the sixth or seventh century A.D. The entire work is not available now. Only 300 verses of the original work have so far been compiled. They have been cited as examples in certain grammatical works. Even the author of the work remains anonymous.

The *kōvai* is a new genre among the Tamil literary works. The *Pāṇṭikkōvai* is regarded as the oldest among them. The Tamil term *kōvai* literally means, putting things together on a string or a wire and when applied to this type of literature it means arranging verses in a thematic sequence. There is no sequence between one love poem and another in the *Caṅkam* literature. Each one of them remains as an individual poem, although it is complete in itself in every aspect. They were composed by individual poets according to their own imaginations and emotions, whereas in *kōvai* literature the emotions and the incidents in lovers' life have been portrayed in an orderly sequence like a historical work and written in a specific poetic form. Generally a *kōvai* is composed in four hundred verses, each verse representing one *turai* or an aspect of love and its emotional phase. It would speak of the first meeting of the lovers, the pre- and post-marital stages, *ūṭal* or sulkiness, raising children, etc., in an orderly sequence as in a biography. The lovers in *Kōvai* literatures are fictitious like lovers in the *Caṅkam* classics. While describing the first meeting place of the lovers, the gardens frequented, or while introducing a simile, it is customary to praise a king, philanthropist or a god, whoever happens to be the hero of the work. Therefore everyone of the



400 verses in the work praises either the mountain, city, river of the hero's land or his own sterling qualities or acts of heroism.

The Pāṇḍya king Netumāraṇ's heroism, generosity, the battlefields in which he waged and won wars are eulogised in *Pāntikkōvai*. The Śaiva saint Mānikkavācakar's *Tirukkōvaiyār* praises Lord Śiva himself. Many works on these lines were written by succeeding generations of poets. Since *kōvai* works were restrained by rigid grammatical rules, very few works on this genre were written later. Among them only a few survived the ravages of time. They have been preserved largely for their unique literary value. In some cases certain *kōvai* works died a natural death once the hero of the work lost his fame in society.

Next to *Tirukkōvaiyār*, *Taṇcaivāṇaṇ Kōvai* gained a pre-eminent place in the Tamil literary world. Its author was a thirteenth century poet by the name of Poyyāmolip-pulavar. The work survived the test of time largely due to the clarity of its subject matter and simplicity of style. Another important reason being that all the four hundred verses in the work have been cited as apt example to explain the grammatical rules embodied in *Nampi-yakapporuḷ*, a grammatical work dealing with various aspects of love and its emotional phases. Like other works of this nature, the *Taṇcaivāṇaṇ Kōvai* too portrays the fictitious life of the lovers in its ramifications like a biography. The hero of the work, Taṇcaivāṇaṇ, a historical figure, is praised in every one of the verses. In fact the work itself is known by its hero's name. Taṇcaivāṇaṇ who happened to be a minister and general of a Pāṇḍya king, has been praised in many places in this work for his heroism and generosity.

### *Paraṇi*

In the eleventh century, the Cōḷa king Kulōttuṅkan won a resounding victory over the Kalinga ruler Anantavarman Codankan. The commander of the victorious side was Karuṇākarattoṇṭaimāṇ. The literary work, *Kaliṅkattupparaṇi* describes the heroism of the commander as well as the Cōḷa king Kulōttuṅkāṇ himself. This is the first literary work of its kind in Tamil to deal with wars as its sole subject matter. Although it is based on an historical episode, the *Kaliṅkattupparaṇi* has interested the readers for its novel imaginative treatment of the subject matter. A new literary genre, it came into vogue in Tamil



around the eleventh century A.D. It describes the valour of a commander who had killed a thousand elephants in a war and won a decisive victory over his enemies. Invariably the location of the battlefield happens to be in the enemy's country, and therefore the work gets its title from the name of his country. Since in this case the vanquished king's country happens to be Kalīṅkam, the work is known as *Kalīṅkattupparaṇi*. The author of the work is Ceyāṅkoṇṭār. Among the works of this type, *Kalīṅkattupparaṇi* continues to be popular even to this day. Although it treats of incidents relating to the war of Kalinga, the poet with his imaginative skill has introduced scenes concerning human love. It has been composed of two-line verses, known as *tāḷicai* in Tamil. They are known for their grandeur, and are well suited to handle war theme—the force, the cruelty and other aspects relating to war. Since the author of the work happens to be a competent poet, he makes rhythmic variations suitable to an incident with the right diction. The lines bring before the reader's mind the very battlefield. The rhythm of the verses is so captivating that the reader forgets the meaning and reads the verses several times only to lose himself in their beauty.

The battle array resounds like sea waves. The noise  
that emanates from a drove of horses and  
a herd of elephants on the battlefield resounds  
more than the sea waves.<sup>5</sup>

From the eyes sparks of anger emanate  
From anger emanates lightning  
The bows resound like thunder  
The arrows pour forth like rain.<sup>6</sup>

There are several hundreds of verses in this work which are noted for their verve and grandeur. Their rhythm compares favourably with the expression of various types of emotions.

The soldiers pray to goddess Kālī at the battlefield. Mythological tradition avers that she is surrounded by hordes of ghosts. Since her star happens to be *Paraṇi*, the work bears the star's name. Along with the name of the country where the battle is waged, the name of the star has also been conjoined to form the title. Hence the particular work under discussion is known as *Kalīṅkam + Paraṇi*, i.e. *Kalīṅkattupparaṇi*. The work begins with

a description of the battlefield where no war has been waged for quite a long time. Therefore the hungry ghosts appeal to Kālī, there goddess to relieve their hunger. Then the news of invasion of Kalinga by the Cōḷa army is received. The war is waged. The scene at the battlefield is vividly described. The enemy's soldiers and elephants lie killed in heaps. The hilarious feast of the ghosts is set forth at length. The fame of the victorious Cōḷa king is brought out in several places in the work. These aforesaid descriptions form the basis rule for the *paraṇi* literature.

### *Ulā*

It has been a custom in the Tamil country to decorate the presiding deities of temples and take them out with their retinue around the *māḍā* streets (Mada streets are the wide streets located on all the four sides of the temple) in procession. It was the usual practice on the part of the poets to praise the deity in all stages from the start to the finish of its procession. The folk songs that were in vogue in ancient times described the god's greatness and his wonderful deeds, sung at the beginning of the procession, gave an account of those who formed the retinue while starting the procession and pointed out the Dēvadāsi's love for the God while the procession was in progress. This type of song would have been in existence with some variations in details for each one of the shrines in the country. Probably one of the earliest poets would have analysed a temple festival and attempted a literary work similar to the folk songs that were in vogue. This literary work is known as the *ulā*. Among the available works of this type Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇār's *Tirukkailāya Nāṇa Ulā* is the oldest. It was written in the ninth century A.D. and is known as the *Ātiyulā* or the first *ulā*.

The *Tirukkailāya Nāṇa Ulā* pays a tribute to Lord Siva. The subject matter of the *ulā* runs in the following manner. At first all the gods in heaven appeal to Śiva that he should appear before them in procession. He consents to their appeal. His consort, Pārvati adorns him with all sorts of jewellery. The god of love, Maṇmataṇ, sends a garland of flowers to wear. Smeared with sandal paste and bedecked with ear rings and other ornaments, Śiva joins the procession. He passes through the gateway of Mount Kailās, guarded by the sacred bull and other celestial beings. He is blessed by the seven hermits. Likewise the twelve *Ātittars* greet

him. Agastya plays on the *yāl* instrument. The fire-god burns incense. The god of rains, Varuṇā, bears the auspicious vessels filled with the waters of holy rivers. While the god of air sweeps the streets, clouds sprinkle water. The moon holds the royal umbrella. The god of wealth scatters alms. The rivers Ganges and Yamuna fan him. Lightning and thunder become Śiva's flags and drums respectively. The dancers such as Arampai and Ūrvaci stage dance concerts. Likewise all other gods in the heaven render some help or other to make the procession an eventful occasion. Lord Śiva emerges after passing through the seven gates of the Mount Kailās. Murugaṇ goes on a peacock ahead of Śiva, while Indra follows him on an elephant. On Śiva's right goes Brahma on a swan, while on the left Viṣṇu goes on an eagle. In front of the procession goes Kāman's army. Many musical instruments are played. The procession goes through the streets and women admire the beauty of Śiva. Then the *ulā* describes the seven types of women, who are classified according to their age, and their love for Śiva. The seven types of women are known in Tamil as *pētai*, *petumpai*, *maṅkai*, *maṭantai*, *arivai*, *terivai* and *pēriḷampēṇ*. The first girl who is in fact a child, is ignorant of love. But on seeing the hero, there is a change in her mind and she falls in love. The second type, *petumpai*, who is between seven and eleven years also falls in love, although she has no clear conception of it. Whereas *maṅkai*, between twelve and thirteen years of age on seeing Śiva craves for His love. The fourth type, *maṭantai* between fourteen and nineteen years of age, shares her thought of love with her maids. The fifth type, *arivai*, between twenty and twenty-five years, pines for Śiva's love. The sixth type, *terivai*, between twenty-six and thirty years, is described as a lovelorn lady yearning for Śiva's love. The last type *pēriḷampēṇ*, who is more than thirty but less than forty years, also longs for Śiva's love and suffers both mentally and physically. While describing the various types of women's love, their games, experiences and expressions of love, clear distinctions are made among them. Thus the hero who goes on a procession should be an attractive personality, capable of captivating the minds of women of all age groups. And it has been the tradition of *ulā* literature to portray such a hero's procession.

Cēramāṇ Perumāl Nāyaṇār, the author of *Nāṇa Ulā*, composed other poetical works such as *Tiruvārūr Mummaṇikkōvai*,

*Tiruvannantāti* and *Tiruvantāti*. The *Mummaṇikkōvai* is a new type of literature composed of three different types of thirty poems in all. Like a chain strung with three different types of gems, this poetical work too is composed of three different types of verses which appear one after the other in a set sequence. Although the origin of *antāti* poems can be traced to the *Caṅkam* work, *Patirruppatu*, the works of Cēramāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇār and the *Nantikkalampakam* alone have laid a firm foundation for composing works in *antāti* form.

The later poets wrote many works of this type, following the model set by Cērmāṇ Perumāḷ Nāyaṇār's *Nāṇa Ulā*. Although the later *ulās* differ in the description of the hero, his country and the retinue, all other features and their descriptions remain the same. According to the poets' imagination, the appearance of the seven types of women, their emotions and their conversations would differ. The similes in them would be handled with great novelty. Beyond this there is little newness in the treatment of the subject matter. Despite the poets' ability to introduce new features, one *ulā* differs very little from another and therefore there is little literary novelty in them. One can find in many *ulās* more skill in versification than creativity.

Besides the *Tirukkailāya Nāṇa Ulā*, Nampiyāntar Nambi's *Āḷuṭaiya Piḷḷaiyār Tiruvulā Mālai* and Oṭṭakkūttar's *Mūvar Ulā* are now available. The former work was written in the eleventh century, while the latter was written in the thirteenth century. Since there was a custom to attribute the qualities of God to the king—to regard kings as representatives of Lord Tirumāl—*ulā* works came to be written on kings too. On the basis of this tradition only Oṭṭakkūttar wrote three *ulās*. In them although one can find some striking similes and notable literary features here and there, they lack in general poetic qualities. Therefore, they are not extensively read. There are *ulās* for the presiding deities of Tiruvārūr, Tiruppūvaṇam, Madurai, Tiruvāṇaikkā, Kanchipuram, Tirukkālatti and Tirukkalukkuṇṇam. The habit of writing *ulās* existed up to the period of the eighteenth century. The *ulās* of that period were on the traditional pattern describing the love of the seven different types of women. Other descriptions too varied very little. As a result there was literary stagnation and by the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries the *ulā* lost its importance and new types of literary works became popular.



*Tūtu*

Since olden days it has been a common practice for a king to send an envoy to another king. From one of the poems in *Puranānūru*, we learn that king Atiyamāṇ sent poetess Auvaiyār as his envoy to Toṇṭaimāṇ. Kings usually sent their envoys on matters concerning war or other state matters. This common practice of sending envoys between kings when borrowed and given a literary flavour assumed certain norms and patterns. In literature the characters need not be kings; but an envoy must be sent from one character to another to convey a message and this type of literature is called in Tamil as *tūtu*. In one of the poem of *Puranānūru*, when Picirāntaiyār, a poet from the Pāṇḍya kingdom, wanted to sing the praise of his bosom friend Kōpperuñcōḷaṇ, a Cōḷa king, the poet addressed a swan flying in the direction of the Cōḷa country in the following manner: "Oh swan! you are flying towards the Cōḷa country. When you sight the king's palace, alight and enter into it. Then introduce yourself to the king, using my name. On hearing my name the king will offer everything you want including the jewellery you need for your wife."<sup>7</sup> In this poem the poet sent the swan imaginatively as his messenger to the Cōḷa king. Likewise birds and beasts as well as inanimate natural objects such as clouds and air were utilised imaginatively as envoys in love poems. In the *Caṅkam* classics there are some poems where one finds animate and inanimate objects so used to convey the heroine's love to the hero. A love-lorn lady, who had not seen her lover at the sea-shore addresses a hurriedly running crab in the following manner: "Oh crab! my lover lives in the town nearby. You should go and tell my sorrow to him. This grove near the shore will not help me. This lagoon, which runs along the country of my lover, will not convey my distress to him. Only you could go and tell him my pitiable conditions."<sup>8</sup> This apostrophe to the crab is found in one of the poems in *Akanānūru*. Similar types of poems are found in the subsequent period of Bhakti literature, where the Nāyanmārs and the Ālvārs send their messengers to the God. These types of poems are known in Tamil as the *tūtu* poems. *Tūtu* poems in the *Tēvāram*, the *Tiruvācakam* and the *Nālāyiram* are known for their intense devotion. In Bhakti literature the devotees send cuckoo, *aṇṇil*, bee, dove, parrot and stork as their imaginative envoys to express their intense love for God. The *tūtu* type of poems are soul stirring because the Nāyanmārs and the Ālvārs

through them pour out their love of God.

There are passages even in certain well-known epics, where lovers send envoys to express their longing for each other. Umāpati Civāccāriyār, a devout Saivite, composed a *tūtu* poem, which has become an independent work of this genre. After this it became a custom to write elaborate works on this type. In fact it became a new literary genre. The objects of envoys too grew in number. Many poets employed such objects as paddy, cloth, tobacco, deer, crow and Tamil as envoys in their works. In one of the works money has been sent as an envoy. Here the poet points out its uniqueness to be an envoy to carry out the particular mission on hand successfully. Since the object selected as the envoy differs from one work to another, the handling of the theme also differs from one *tūtu* to another. In one of the *tūtu* poems, tobacco, a newly arrived commodity in the country, is utilised as the messenger. In the *Tamīlviṭu Tūtu*, the poet sends the Tamil language as his envoy to Śiva, the presiding deity at the temple of Madurai. In this work the heroine (in fact the poet) while selecting the Tamil language as her messenger, besides pointing out its merits says "you are fit to fulfil my mission successfully and you have the capacity to express adequately my longing to my lover."<sup>9</sup> In pointing out the merits of the envoy, the poet in fact gives an elaborate account of the literary wealth of Tamil language. Although the following lines are the heroine's words, they show in fact the poet's pride in the greatness of his mother tongue.

I live because of the Tamil language  
Or else

I will reject even the nectar of the Devas (gods).<sup>10</sup>

Many poems in *tūtu* works are distinguished for the dexterous handling of the subject matter. In addition, the poets, according to the tradition of their times, played on words to heighten the beauty of the usage of words. Now-a-days puns and other word tricks have lost their meaning and appeal in poetry. Therefore the study of *tūtu* poems is gradually on the decline.



### NOTES

1. P.C. Punnaivananata Mudaliar (ed.), *Nantikkalampakam*, reprint, (Madras, 1976), pm 113, p. 258.
2. *NTP*, pm 917, p. 210.
3. *TM*, pm 366, pp. 776-77.
4. Paratiyar, *Paratiyar Kavitaikal*, 'Teciyaakitankal' (Madras, 1976), pm 11, p. 29.
5. P. Palanivelaip Pillai, (ed.), *Kalinkattupparani*, revised edn (Madras, 1968), pm 404, p. 176.
6. *Ibid.*, pm 409, p. 178.
7. *PN*, pm 67, pp. 40-41.
8. P.V. Comacuntaranar (ed.), *Akanunuru*, edn (Madras, 1974), pm. 170, p. 166.
9. Cankuppulavar (ed.), *Tamilvitu Tutu*, 5th edn (Madras, 1975), pm. 264, p. 137.
10. *Ibid.*, pm 151, p. 29.

## Epics

(500–1200 A.D.)

### *Works on Mahābhārata*

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, which deal with the incarnations of Tirumāl, became popular in the Tamil country during the period of Bhakti literature. Mostly as similes and illustrations the heroic deeds of Rāma and Kaṇṇaṇ are mentioned in some of the poems of the *Caṅkam* classics. Certain incidents of these epics are mentioned in the folk songs of *Cilappatikāram*. However, the entire stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* were written in Tamil only in the fourth and the fifth centuries A.D.

The poet Peruntēvaṇār, the author of the first *Bhāratam* in Tamil wrote prefatory prayer poems for some of the anthologies in the *Caṅkam* classics. These prayer songs differ little from the poems of the anthologies both in rhythm and number of lines. Such prayer poems are found at the beginning of five anthologies, namely *Akanāṇūru*, *Narriṇai*, *Kuṇṭokai*, *Iṅkuṇūru* and *Puraṇāṇūru*. Unfortunately his major work, the *Bhāratam*, is not available now. However we find some of the verses of this work cited as examples in the commentaries on the *Tolkāppiyam* and the *Yāpparuṅkalam*. These verses are in *akaval* metre and follow the tradition of *Caṅkam* classics. It is believed that Peruntēvaṇār's *Bhāratam*, despite being a poetical work, is interspersed with prose.

Apart from Peruntēvaṇār's *Bhāratam*, there was one other Tamil version of the *Mahābhārata*, written in *veṇpa* metre and

interspersed with prose. It was written in the ninth century A.D., during the period of the Pallava king Nantivarman. Even this work is available only in fragments now. The verses are written in chaste Tamil, although the prose part of the work is in *maṇippiravāḷam* style full of Sanskrit words. Aruṇīlaivicākaṇ or Vatcarācaṇ's *Bhāratam*, which was written during the thirteenth century A.D. is not available now. With the advent of Villiputtūrār's *Bhāratam* in the seventeenth century A.D., which was written in a rhythmic and imposing style, all other earlier *Bhāratams* in Tamil sank into oblivion.

### Works on Rāmāyaṇa

Like Peruntēvaṇār's *Bhāratam*, there was a Tamil version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* written in *akaval* metre. Only five verses of this work is now available. Besides this, there was the Jain *Rāmāyaṇa*, which was popular among the Jains of the Tamil country. Even in this work only a few verses have survived. They owe their existence to the subsequent generation of poets, who included them in some of their compiled and original works. With the advent of Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the earlier *Rāmāyaṇas* disappeared from the scene because they never approached Kampan's work in grandeur. The history of Tamil literature points out the obvious truth that once a great work appears on a certain theme, all works of lesser merit on the same theme lose their popularity in society.

### Other Works

As the Vaiṣṇavites spread the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, so the Śaivites popularised the miraculous deeds of Lord Śiva among the people. The first Tamil work elaborating the miracles of Śiva is *Kallāṭam*. It was written by poet Kallāṭar in *akaval* metre and in the tradition of the *Caṅkam* classics. The work contains one hundred verses. They speak without exception about the miracles performed by the presiding deity at the temple of Madurai. Its treatment of the subject matter is based on the Akam tradition. This work laid the foundation for the subsequent emergence of Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Jain *purāṇas* in Tamil. At the same time the influence of Sanskrit literary traditions increased in Tamil. In fact many works in Tamil were modelled on Sanskrit. During this period a large part of the Tamil country was under the domain of the Pallavas of Kanchipuram. They encouraged both

Tamil and Sanskrit learning in their territory. The great Pallava king Mahendravarman himself wrote his famous work, *Mattavilāsa* in Sanskrit. The Pallava capital Kanchipuram, distinguished itself as a great centre of higher learning. It was from here that the two distinguished Tamils, Dharmapala and Dinnaka went as professors to the University at Nalanda. Dandin lived and wrote his famous Sanskrit work, *Kāvyādarśa* from Kanchipuram. The renowned sculptural pieces at Māmallapuram were also carved during this period. Likewise many literary and grammatical works were written both in Tamil and Sanskrit. During the same period the Jains and the Buddhists lost their religious leadership and influence in society, but gained prominence in literary activity. They wrote many literary and grammatical works in Tamil. Though some among them have got lost, the remaining works are still regarded as very useful. In fact these works in extant preserve their names in the annals of Tamil literary history.

The third part of *Tolkāppiyam* is the only extant grammatical work, which explains the various aspects of love poems in Tamil. Although many grammatical works were written after it, the only work that is available is the *Kaḷaviyal*. It is considered to have been written in the seventh or eighth century A.D. Since it explains the various aspects of premarital love, it is known as the *Kaḷaviyal* (the Tamil term *kaḷavu* means clandestine love). It contains only sixty *sutras*. Poet Iṟaiyaṇār is its author. Now the commentary on *Kaḷaviyal* is highly commended and more popular than the original work itself. It was written by Nakkīrar. Many pieces of information relating to the history of Tamil literature are to be found in the commentary. It mentions the names of many poets of the *Caṅkam* period. Works relating to literature, music and drama are also mentioned. It is from this commentary that we learn about Agastya, the author of the first Tamil *Caṅkam* or academies. Many of the works mentioned in the commentary are not now in existence. However the names of some of the works, their verses and *sutras* are mentioned in certain grammatical commentaries.

Nakkīrar's commentary on the *Kaḷaviyal* is important work from another angle. The researchers who trace the history of Tamil prose will first point out the prose passages that appear interspersed with poems in the epic *Cilappatikāram*. They are in fact the oldest prose writing in Tamil. Next comes the prose in *Kaḷaviyal* commentary. Though in appearance it is prose, it has in fact many

features of poetry. The rhythmic units, the frequent use of alliterations, terseness of language and the use of adjectives give the prose a poetic touch. In fact it is an example for those who wish to know about the prose that was used by the poets some twelve centuries ago.

As the *Kaḷaviyal* exemplifies the various aspects of love and its associated phases, so the *Purapporuḷ Venpāmālai* illustrates heroism and other aspects of life. The *Venpāmālai* was written by Aiyāṇāritāṇār in the ninth century A.D. Since it happens to be a grammatical work, it contains *sutras* as well as many poems in *venpa* metre cited to explain the content of the *sutras*. These poems are known for their brevity, verve and imagination. In literary merit *Purapporuḷ Venpāmālai* is compared to *Nālaṭiyār* and *Paḷamolināṇūru*.

To propagate their theology, the Jains and the Buddhists competed with the Śaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites and wrote epics like *Peruṅkatai*, *Mērumantara Purāṇam*, *Cānti Purāṇam*, *Sripurāṇam*, *Cintāmaṇi*, *Cūtāmaṇi*, *Valaiyāpati*, *Kuṇṭalakēci* and *Nīlakēci*. Some among these gained literary status by virtue of their poetic merit as well as possessing all the essential features that are required for an epic. Others for want of literary merit fell into oblivion.

### *Peruṅkatai*

It is regarded by some scholars that the Jain epic *Peruṅkatai* was based on *Pirukatkatā*, a work written in Paicāca. Others consider that it was based on two Sanskrit works, the *Pirukatkatā Maṅcari* and the *Katā-carit-cākaram*. The *Peruṅkatai* was written in Tamil by Koṅkuvēḷir, a poet from the Koṅgu country.

The *Peruṅkatai* describes in five cantos the story of Utayaṇaṇ, a king of Kōsambi city in Vattanātu. One other work known as *Utayaṇa-kumāra Kāviyam* also describes the same story. It is not very popular among the scholars because of its lack of literary merit. However there are some very interesting passages in it which are known for their beauty of description. Among the great epics that were written in *akaval* metre, *Peruṅkatai* is an important work. It speaks about the moral and philosophical tenets of Jainism. The author should be commended for subtly propagating Jainism without disturbing the even flow of the story in the work. Only a section of the first part and a small passage towards the end are lost.



### *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*

Up to the ninth century A.D. all the major works in Tamil were written either in *venpa* or *akaval* metre. Since the ninth century Tiruttakkatēvar, a Jain monk, created a new type of verse form known as *viruttam*. Its source could be traced to the *Cilappatikāram*, but it was Tiruttakkatēvar, who popularised it by writing the entire epic in three thousand *viruttam* poems. A *viruttam* contains four lines of equal length with equal number of syllables in each. Even the formation of syllables will be the same in all the lines. Therefore there is little variation in rhythm among them. As there is no restriction to the length and number of syllables to be used in a line, so the types of *viruttam* too multiplied. In some *viruttams* the lines may be too long and in others too short. A *viruttam* full of short syllables will indicate celerity of rhythm. Long syllables may indicate tranquillity or continuity of emotion. Though the *viruttam* itself is one specific type of verse, it affords scope to create hundreds of nuances in rhythm. This type of rhythmic variation is not possible either in *venpa* or *akaval* types of verses. The poets who came after Tiruttakkatēvar showed their talent in creating novelties in *viruttam*. They also succeeded in highlighting different emotions through rhythmic variations. This revolution in the technique of writing Tamil poetry enabled the growth of new forms in *viruttam* poetry, where the style changed according to the emotions. Though poets like Kampar and others were efficient in handling the *viruttam*, the credit of innovation undoubtedly goes to Tiruttakkatēvar.

Tiruttakkatēvar wrote a minor work called *Nariviruttam*, where he emphasised certain ethical values by citing the actions of a fox. Tradition avers that to make known his talent as a poet, Tiruttakkatēvar wrote this minor work.

The epic *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* tells the story of king Cīvakaṇ, who married eight women. Each one of these marriages is narrated in an *ilampakam* or a canto. Therefore the work is known as a manual of marriage. The last and the ninth canto of the work, however, speaks about Cīvakaṇ's renunciation as well as his ultimate reunion with the Supreme. Since the reunion with the Supreme is the ultimate in Jain philosophy, the work is called *muttinūl* or a work which shows the ultimate reality. The epic *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* is based on Sanskrit works like the *Kṣattira Cūṭāmaṇi*, *Kattiya Cintāmaṇi* and *Sripurāṇam*. However the readers will seldom



realise that it was an adoption from Sanskrit works because it was written like the *Cilappatikāram* following the Tamil literary tradition. Although it was meant to propagate Jainism, the work was read by scholars of other religions for its sheer literary excellence. Tradition avers that one of the Cōla kings, himself a Śaivite, avidly read the *Cintāmaṇi*. (It is also said that to change his habit, Ceḱkilār, a minister under him, undertook the noble task of writing the hagiology *Periyapurāṇam*.) One of the famous commentators, Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar, himself a Śaivite, wrote a commentary on the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. These are examples to show its unique literary value and its capacity to captivate the hearts of Tamils irrespective of their faiths.

There is a story, which attests to Tiruttakkatēvar's nobility of character. He seems to have held a red-hot iron in hand in order to prove his celibacy when some doubted it, especially after reading the passages concerning the epic hero Cīvakaṇ's amorous activities with eight women.

There is yet another story which points out to the fact that the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* gave a fresh fillip to the growth of later literary works. It tells us that the famous poet Kampar, the author of the Tamil *Rāmāyaṇa*, scooped out the best from the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. Of course, there are evidences to prove this in Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇa*. The epic *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* distinguished itself as a great work while describing the country-side, the five-fold landscape as well as fine arts like music. Although the emotion of love dominates the earlier parts of the epic, one can find in it all the other eight emotions fully portrayed.

When Cīvakaṇ's father fell a victim to his minister's plot, his mother gave birth to him at a cremation ground outside the city. The mother lamented when she thought how a royal child, who should have been born in a palace in the midst of festivities and celebrations, had to be born like an orphan at the cremation ground. Her grief is portrayed in a gripping manner in the following poem:

The music of the drums happen to be the  
fire that burns the pyre  
The auspicious lamp happens to be the fire  
that burns the pyre  
The stage to dance for the ghosts (like

shadows) is the cremation ground  
 The words of blessing are the noise  
 of owls  
 Is this the way a king has to be born?¹

The *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* is a great epic in which various emotions are beautifully depicted.

### *Cūlāmaṇi*

The epic *Cūlāmaṇi* is yet another work of the Jains, which is placed next to the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* in its importance as a literary piece. Its authors *Tōlāmoḷittēvar* is a Jain. It contains 2,330 *viruttams*. It is based on a Sanskrit work entitled the *Sripurāṇam*. Like the original, the *Cūlāmaṇi* narrates the story of Tiviṭṭaṇ and Vicayaṇ. It describes the landscape and the greatness of cities according to the Tamil literary tradition. It emphasises like *Cintāmaṇi* renunciation and realisation of the Supreme. The verses are known for their easy flow and pleasant rhythm. Many scholars appreciate the work for the sheer beauty of handling the Tamil language. The poems which describe the beauty of nature are remarkable word-pictures. In some places *Tōlāmoḷittēvar* excelled *Tiruttakkatēvar* in the art of composing poems in the *virtuttam* metre.

### *Valaiyāpati*

The epic *Valaiyāpati* is not available now. Since the commentators cite some of the verses from this epic in their commentaries, we can infer that it must have been a popular work during their time. Now only seventy verses are in existence. There is reason to believe that it was there in the last century, for the renowned editor Dr. U.V. Caminata Iyer had seen the work in a monastery, but he was unable to trace it at a subsequent search. It is regrettable that many Tamil works, which were in existence up to the last century, were lost to posterity when Tamil was replaced by English as the medium of instruction. From the available verses we learn that the epic *Valaiyāpati* was also written in excellent *viruttam* metre.

### *Kuṇṭalakēci and Other Works*

Like other Jain works, the Buddhist work *Kuṇṭalakēci* also emphasises the negation of life. It is interesting to note that one

of the verses in the work describes the transitory nature of the human body. The author wondered at the ignorance of those who lamented the death of their kith and kin, while they themselves were dying at every moment.

Infancy gives place to childhood  
Childhood gives birth to youth  
Youth passes away yielding to the pressure  
of manhood  
Even that fades away with the arrival of old age  
Hence we have been dying everyday and each day  
Why don't we grieve over this?<sup>2</sup>

The epic *Kuṇṭalakēci*, which belonged to the eighth century A.D. is not there now. It should have been a very famous work up to the period of the commentators, for it was often quoted in their commentaries. It narrates the story of a vaiśya woman, who was a Jain by birth. She killed her husband when he attempted to murder her. A Buddhist monk later initiated her into Buddhism. Thereupon she indulged in polemics with Jains, preached the gospel of her new faith with vigour and attained salvation. The author, Nātakuttaṇār's primary aim in writing this work was to denigrate Jainism. The epic *Kuṇṭalakēci* is undoubtedly a Buddhist propaganda work, which reflects the religious rivalry that existed between Buddhists and Jains in the Tamil country in the first millennium A.D. Only twenty-nine verses of this work are now available.

Another poet, obviously a Jain, wrote the epic *Nīlakēci* to dispute the claims of *Kuṇṭalakēci* and to uphold the principles of Jainism. The main character in this work is also a woman, the disciple of a Jain monk. She vanquished the Buddhist nun *Kuṇṭalakēci* in a debate. Thereupon she went to a Buddhist monk to argue with him on questions relating to moral laxity among them. She also preached the tenets of Jainism to them. The entire work, which consists of 896 *viruttams*, applauds the philosophy and metaphysics of Jainism and criticises other religious philosophies. As a result religious polemics dominate literary excellence in this work.

Vāmaṇāccāriyār's work, the *Mērumantara Purāṇam* is also a Jain epic. It relates the life of two brothers, who after several births obtain release from the birth-cycle and attain salvation.

Another Jain work is called *Cānti Purāṇam*. It is written in the *viruttam* type of verses. Only nine verses of this work are now available. It was written to narrate the life of one of the important Jain saints.

Another epic, the *Nākakumāra Kāppiyam* was written to propagate Jainism. With the passage of time the epic disappeared without leaving even a verse behind.

*Yacōtara Kāviyam*, which contains 330 *viruttams*, is based on a Sanskrit work. It relates the story of Yacōtara. The Tamil version besides narrating the story, emphasises the philosophy of *ahimsa* or non-violence. Compared with other works of the Jains like the *Cintāmaṇi* and the *Cūlāmaṇi*, the *Yacōtara Kāviyam* possesses little literary merit.

The above mentioned Jain and Buddhist works, which were composed in competition with Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva works were classified by some scholars at a later date in *Aimperuṅkāppiyam* of five major epics and *Aiṅciṟukāppiyam* or five minor epics. No specific reason could be advanced for this classification. The five major epics are the *Cilappatikāram*, *Maṇimkālai*, *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, *Valaiyāpati* and *Kuṇṭalakēci*. and the five minor epics are the *Uṭayānakumāra Kāviyam*, *Nākakumāra Kāviyam*, *Yacōtara Kāciyam*, *Nīlakēci* and *Cūlāmaṇi*. There is, however, no justification for including the *Cūlāmaṇi* in the minor epics, comparable as it is to the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi* in many respects. Likewise it is untenable to classify the *Kuṇṭalakēci*, a work of polemical nature, as one of the five major epics. Hence this arbitrary classification could be ignored.

### *The Cōlas and the Śaivite Works*

The Cōla rule, which became popular in the ninth century A.D. in the Tamil country, provided the necessary climate for the growth of Tamil literature. Some of the Cōla kings were friends of poets and the latter held them in high esteem. Some among them were adept in literary learning. The Cōla monarch, Kulōttuṅga was greatly devoted to Cēkkilār, the author of *Periyapurāṇam*. Another king was a friend of Kampar, the author of the Tamil *Rāmāyaṇa*. The poet Oṭṭakkūttar, the prince among poets, was an eminent court poet of the Cōlas. The Cōlas' fame spread from the South to the North of the Indian sub-continent, as well as the islands beyond the seas. They



conquered many countries and established an empire. They built many large temples with towering *kopurams*. They performed many heroic deeds, unheard of by the Tamils. Commensurate with their imperial greatness, the growth of Tamil literature too reached its zenith.

The Cōḷa's patronage was largely responsible for the preservation and growth of Śaiva literature in Tamil. Kaṇṭarātittan, who wrote some of the poems in *Tiruvicaippā*, belonged to the Cōḷa family. The kings of the Cōḷa dynasty not only appointed celebrated musicians to sing the devotional songs of *Tēvāram* in temples but also created endowments for their upkeep. Even today some of the inscriptions in temples bear out such endowments.

During the period of Rājarāja Cōḷa, the devotional songs of nine Saiva saints like Tirumāḷikaittēvar, Karuvūrttēvar and others were collected and classified into an anthology, known as the *Tiruvicaippā*. Next to *Tēvāram*, it has been regarded as a great work capable of touching the hearts of devotees. Karuvūrttēvar's devotional songs in praise of the presiding deity at the Big Temple, built by Rājarāja at Tanjavur, and at Kankaikontacolapuram ought to melt the souls of devotees. The very name of the work, *Tiruvicaippā*, indicates the uniqueness of its musical composition. These poems are recited along with Cēntañār's *Tiruppallāntu* even today in the temples of Tamil Nadu. The *Tiruvicaippā* contains 301 poems.

The Bhakti literature of Śaivism was classified into twelve sections or *tirumuraikals*. The first three *tirumuraikals* contain Tiruñāṇacampantar's four thousand *Tēvārams*. The next three *tirumuraikals* contain Tirunāvukkaracār's three thousand *Tēvārams*. Cuntaramūrtti Nāyaṇār's thousand *Tēvārams* form the seventh *tirumurai*. In the eighth *tirumurai*, Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam* and *Tirukkōvaiyār* are included. The anthology, *Tiruvicaippā* and *Tiruppallantu* are included in the ninth *tirumurai*. Tirumūlar's *Tirumantiram* is the tenth *tirumurai*. A collection of poems composed by Nakkīratēva Nāyaṇār, Paṭṭiṇattār and other saints of Saiva origin, is to be found in the eleventh *tirumurai*. Cēkkilār's *Periyapurāṇam* is the twelfth *tirumurai*.

### *Periyapurāṇam*

The *Periyapurāṇam*, written in the medieval period, was neither a translation nor a prototype of a work in another language.

It was an original work written for the Tamil country by Cēkkiḷār, who was the minister of the Cōḷa monarch, Kulōttuṅga. In the ninth century A.D. Cuntaramūrtti Nāyaṇār wrote eleven verses in honour of the sixty-three Saiva saints and this is known as the *Tiruttoṇṭattokai*. Another poet, Nampiyāṇṭār Nampi (sketching the lives of sixty-three Nāyaṇmārs) wrote a brief work entitled the *Tiruttoṇṭar Tiruvantāti*. Cēkkiḷār elaborated these brief sketches and wrote an epic in more than four thousand verses. As a minister he travelled all over the country, where the Nāyaṇmārs had lived and collected relevant oral information to write his epic. Only these oral and other historical evidences were used in his work. No attempt was made like other poets to include imaginative sequences in his work to impress the reader with its grandeur. Although imaginative anecdotes are not ruled out in oral traditions, Cēkkiḷār seems to have carefully verified his source material to write an authentic hagiology of Saiva saints in a simple and mellifluous style. Therefore, the *Periyapurāṇam* is the only major work, which apart from narrating the lives of the Nāyaṇmārs, gives a true picture of the life of the common people of the middle ages in the Tamil country. To learn more about the people's customs and manners, beliefs, likes and dislikes and their activities in an historical sequence, the *Periyapurāṇam* is the only available work.

Cēkkiḷār wanted to narrate the lives of the Nāyaṇmārs in the form of an epic. Since an epic should have a unique hero, he chose as the hero Cuntaramūrtti Nāyaṇār, one among the four most important Nāyaṇmārs.

Cēkkiḷār begins the epic with the story of Cuntaramūrtti and his pilgrimage to the Siva shrine, where he composed the *Tiruttoṇṭattokai*. From this point the author switched over to the stories of other Nāyaṇmārs in the same order in which they had been narrated in the *Tiruttoṇṭattokai*. After finishing their stories, Cēkkiḷār once again tells us more about Cuntarar's pilgrimage to other shrines and his return to Mount Kailās. Cēkkiḷār uses only the first lines of Cuntarar's poems in the *Tiruttoṇṭattokai* as titles for various sections of his epic.

Cēkkiḷār's reverence and devotion to the Nāyaṇmārs was unique. He was applauded as 'toṇṭar-cīr-paravuvār' or one who had praised the glory of the devotees of Śiva. Since he led a noble life, he refrained from mentioning evil deeds like murder in the



epic. Up to his period, however great a person might be, he would be mentioned only in the singular pronoun *avan*. But Cēkkiḷār changed this trend, and mentioned the Nāyaṇmārs, whether male or female in his work by the honorific plural noun, *avar*. He showed this deference to great souls in the fervour of devotion. The Cōla monarch sent the *Periyapurāṇam* on the back of his royal elephant in a procession and honoured its author. He went to the extent of fanning Cēkkiḷār, while he was engaged in giving a discourse on the Nāyaṇmārs. One of the poets of the nineteenth century, Mīṇāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, wrote a book entitled *Cēkkiḷār-piḷḷait-tamiḷ* in which he paid a glowing tribute to Cēkkiḷār as a "unique poet, who sang to cause the efflorescence of Bhakti."<sup>3</sup>

The verses in the *Periyapurāṇam* are known for their simplicity and clarity. They reflect Cēkkiḷār, who was known for his straightforwardness, refinement, simplicity and culture. Since the author's main concern was to tell the truth, according to his experience, he paid little attention to introduce imaginative sequences in the epic. As a result, though the emotional features of an epic are subdued, the work possesses all the essential characteristics of an epic.

Cēkkiḷār simplified the style of *viruttam*, which had been developed by Tiruttakkatēvar.

Cēkkiḷār gave a graphic description of the life-styles of different groups of people in his epic. In those days each occupational group had a life-style of its own. He described the life of drummers, fishermen and hunters with remarkable skill. To cite an example, the daily life of the hunters was described at length in *Kaṇṇappa Nāyaṇār Purāṇam*. Kaṇṇappar himself was a hunter. Hunters generally lived in mountainous regions hunting wild animals. Their grey hounds, their nets hung on the branch of wood-apple trees and their animals like pigs, deer, and bears domesticated and kept in the front yard to catch undomesticated animals were minutely described. Likewise the hunters' children playing with tiger and elephant cubs were graphically described. In the same way, other occupational groups along with their surroundings were appropriately described in the *Periyapurāṇam*.

Cēkkiḷār's artistry is exemplified in handling similes. While narrating conversations, he used only the similes that were common to a particular group. For example when two hunters were discussing Kaṇṇappar's neglect of duty and his attachment to

Śivaliṅgam (the image of Śiva) one of them said “Kaṇṇappar has been holding the Śivaliṅgam like an iguana holding a crevice of a mountain.”<sup>4</sup> Here Cēkkiḷār used only a familiar scene known to the hunters—iguana holding the crevices of mountains and trees—as a simile in the poem. To use similes like this in the conversation of hunters is not only natural but also appropriate.

While describing the Nāyaṇmārs’ love of God, Cēkkiḷār mentioned that their noble mind wanted nothing but the power to worship God with love and devotion.

Except worshipping God with a loving heart  
They cared little for salvation  
Such was their nobility of mind.<sup>5</sup>

Further he pointed out in the following verse their high ideals and principles in life.

They are in greatness comparable to themselves  
Their matchless nobility conquer the universe  
No impediments have they in life  
Unapproachable is their position  
With love of God they enjoy life  
Beyond good and evil they are  
And all dualities created by Maya.<sup>6</sup>

Cēkkiḷār’s usage of words become mellifluous while describing the Nāyaṇmārs abiding love of God. They become forceful and strong while describing their determination.

The poem that describes Kāraikkāl Ammaiār’s request for a boon from Śiva, portrays her artless and sincere devotion.

After praying to you for undying love  
I pray to you for birthlessness  
If I were to be born again  
I should possess your grace of never forgetting you  
To you I pray still more  
To be ever joyfully singing at your feet  
While you are dancing.<sup>7</sup>

In poems like these, where the devotees express their wish to Śiva, we discover not only their love of God but their spiritual culture.

Only the devotion to God comes to the forefront in Cēkkiḷār’s description of nature as well as the description of other things. To

him the inflorescence of paddy in the fields resemble the noble hearts of Śiva's devotees. Again the appearance of fully grown drooping paddy, look like the assembly of devotees, bowing to each other with great reverence. The humming bees covered with pandanus's (tālampū) pollen dust appear like the praying devotees of Śiva, their bodies smeared all over with the holy ash. The cassia tree (Koṇṇai tree) which blooms in bunches resemble Siva's matted hair.

Cēkkaḷār compared a brave soldier to a self-realised soul. As the enemies disappear before a brave soldier, so the human foibles like lust vanish from a realised man. While narrating Kaṇṇappar's story, Cēkkaḷār described him as a youth of sixteen, with mastery of all the arts known to the hunters and glowing like a full-moon. Moreover his growth was comparable to the ever growing accumulation of righteousness.

The hills covered with mist in winter look as if they are covering themselves with a white blanket to prevent chillness. In a winter morning it is but natural for the sun to appear and disappear often. To explain this natural phenomenon, Cēkkaḷār described that because of chillness and mist the sun was unable to extend his hand. That was the reason why the rays of the sun appeared and disappeared.

Except in the monsoon season, the river Pālāru in Tamil Nadu is an expanse of level sand. However in the dry season, people still use its sub-soil water by digging holes on its banks. Knowing its proverbial dryness, Cēkkaḷār while describing the river Pālāru, concealed this defect by the skillful use of a simile. He compared the river to a mother who breastfeeds her child. When the child is hungry it holds the mother's breast and sucks the milk to its heart's content. Likewise when the farmers were in need of water for their lands they used to dig holes on the banks of the river. The water that came out of the springs flowed into canals to irrigate the fields. By this comparison Cēkkaḷār not merely concealed the river's dryness but praised it for its judicious supply of water to the farmers. Many of Cēkkaḷār's descriptions in the epic Periyapurāṇam are known for their simplicity, beauty and aptness.

### *Oṭṭakkūttar*

Oṭṭakkūttar was a very influential court poet of the Cōlas in the twelfth century A.D. The term *kūttar* refers to dancing Śiva.

Since the poet had come from Orissa, the prefix *oṭṭa* is affixed with *kūttar* to form the name *oṭṭakkūttar*. However many stories were written to explain the significance of the prefix *oṭṭa*. He was an expert in Tamil language and literature and a scholar in Sanskrit. He upheld the old traditions in literature and was an arch critic of those who set at naught traditions. He was the court poet of the Cōḷa king Vikrama Cōḷa (1118–1133 A.D.). Oṭṭakkūttar was not only the Tamil teacher for Vikrama Cōḷa's son and grandson but their court poet also. He composed three separate *ulās* for each of the three Cōḷa monarchs. The title of the work is *Mūvarulū*. Another work, *paraṇi* eulogises Vikrama Cōḷa's victory at the battlefield of Kalinga. Kūttar's *Kalinkapparaṇi* is no longer available. Perhaps his *paraṇi* would have been forgotten when Ceyankonṭars's *Kalinkattupparaṇi* attained fame in the literary circles. Oṭṭakkūttar also wrote one other *paraṇi*, known as *Takkayākapparaṇi* in honour of Lord Siva. The work sings the praise of Siva, who destroyed Takkaṇ's ceremonial fire (yaga) and won a victory over him.

Besides writing an *ulā*, Kūttar wrote a *piḷḷaittamiḷ* on Kulottunga II (1133–1150 A.D.) and other laudatory works on the Cōḷa ministers and commanders.

Since Oṭṭakkūttar lived to a ripe old age and the court poet of three monarchs, he was given many titles and honours. He was highly influential in the royal palace and his word was law. No poet survived his wrath. Therefore many stories were written later to substantiate his influence with the Cōḷa kings. According to one story, Kūttar seems to have given endless troubles to the poet Pukaḷēnti out of jealousy. Stories of this nature have no historical evidence to support. In fact Pukaḷēnti lived several centuries after Kūttar.

Oṭṭakkūttar, who was given the title "prince among poets" (*kaviccakkaravartti*), wrote conforming to the then prevailing literary tradition. Therefore, there was no chance for him to write inspired and highly imaginative works. None of his works could stand comparison with Kampar's. Although Kūttar's poetry was known for its abundance of natural description and brevity, they lacked the easy flow one would expect of poetry. The majesty and harshness that we find in his life are also reflected in his poetry. Neither refinement nor sweetness of heart is reflected in it. During his life-time; he gained wide popularity never achieved by any



other poet. But none of his works gained that unique position. However *Takkayākapparāṇi* alone won an important place among the Tamil literary works. Even this one is regarded next only to the *Kalīṅkattupparāṇi* in literary merit. The *Takkayākapparāṇi* is composed of 815 *tāḷicai* verses. It exhibits the author's wide range of knowledge and erudite scholarship. There is a literary tradition in *parāṇi* works, where Goddess Kālī used to show the battlefield to the ghosts. In the *Takkayākapparāṇi* Siva shows the battlefield to his wife. The work in general speaks about the greatness of Saivism. It also points out Kūttar's devotion to Saraswathi. In the preface, he pays a glowing tribute to Rājarāja II (1146-73), for giving all facilities to write this work.

There is a story about Oṭṭakkūttar in relation to the Tamil version of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. Tradition avers that both Oṭṭakkūttar and Kampar competed in composing the epic. When Oṭṭakkūttar learnt of the beauty and grandeur of Kampar's poems, he destroyed his own work and only the seventh canto, known as *Uttarakāṇṭam* escaped destruction.

### Kampar

"The Poet Kampar was born in the Tamil country,"<sup>8</sup> said the twentieth century poet Pāratīyār. What he meant was that the country gained fame because of Kampar's birth. In the Tamil literary firmament Kampar shines like a star, inaccessible to others. He was born in a small village near Mayavaram in the family of a Kali temple priest. For all his poor family background he emerged as one of the greatest poets of the world. Many stories are woven around his name. One story goes to tell that since he had guarded a millet field (known in Tamil as *kampaṇ-kollai*) in his younger days he was known as Kampar. Another story tells us that since he had been found as a child near a column (known in Tamil as *kampam*) of a Kali temple he was named Kampar. Yet another story narrates that since he was born in a family, whose members happened to be ardent worshippers of Lord Ēkampaṇ, the presiding deity at Kanchipuram, he was called Kampar. Kampar never forgot the philanthropist Caṭaiyappar, who had patronized him in his younger days. He used Caṭaiyappar's fame, sterling qualities and greatness as similes in the *Rāmāyaṇa* once in every thousand poems. His name appears only in the most important

places in the story. One such important occasion was Rāma's coronation, which took place soon after his return from the forest. Kampar utilised this unique opportunity to express his gratitude to Caṭaiyappar by mentioning that Vasishta crowned Rama only after receiving the crown from the hands of farmers belonging to Tiruvennainallur Caṭaiyappar's clan.

Scholars differ regarding the age of Kampar. Some consider that he belonged to the ninth century, while others, the twelfth century A.D. Tradition avers that he commanded greater respect from the people than the monarch of the country. The same tradition tells us that he left the royal court of the Cōḷa monarch derisively asking, "Is there no other king to patronize poets except you?" Perhaps his pride in his poetic talents would have caused this friction with the king. Kampar's son Ampikāpati, who was himself a great poet, loved the king's daughter, against his will. This would have, perhaps, aggravated the differences further between the king and Kampar. Finally he left the Cōḷa country with a broken heart when the monarch sentenced his son to death.

Kampar died at Nattaracankottai in the Pāṇḍya country, where his tomb is even now worshipped like a temple. Literary critics consider that Kampar's sorrow on the loss of his son found literary expression in the *Rāmāyaṇa* while describing Dasaratha's sorrow over the departure of his son Rāmā to the forest and in Rāvaṇa's grief over the death of his son Indrajit. Ampikāpati himself seems to have written a love poem entitled the *Ampikāpatikkōvai*.

There are some fictitious stories and poems which depict some of the episodes that had taken place between Kampar and the poetess Auvaīyār.

Kampar applauded agriculture and the qualities of agriculturists in the *Ēr Elupatu* and the *Tirukkai Valakkam*. His work the *Caracuvati Antāti* is a book of devotional poems in praise of the goddess of learning. The *Caṭakōpar Antāti* reveals his devotion to the famous Vaiṣṇava saint Nammālvār. The proverbial saying "the king of Lanka was afflicted like the grief-stricken debtor's heart", is nothing but a line from one of his stray verses. Many such interesting but stray verses were attributed to him. Others have been incorporated in the main body of his immortal work the *Kamparāmāyaṇa*. There is a popular view among the people that he was the greatest poet of his time. Some of the proverbs



like, "Kampar is great in scholarship and learning" and "Even the peg in Kampan's house can compose poems", attest to his standing as a scholar and poet in the country.

### *Kamparāmāyaṇa*

*Kamparāmāyaṇa* is the only work which upholds Kampan's fame as a poet. There are stories which highlight that he was able to compose this monumental work within a short period because of his extraordinary poetic gifts. Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇam* which consists of 10,000 poems received the unanimous approval of scholars at Sirangam.

Stories relating to Rama's heroic deeds have been in currency in the Tamil country since pre-historic times. Some of the stories related in the *Caṅkam* classics are not found in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. The *Puranānūru* for example narrates an amusing incident related to the *Rāmāyaṇa* story thus: When Rāvaṇa abducted Sita from the hermitage, she tied all her jewellery in a bundle and dropped it at Kishkindha. It fell into the hands of monkeys. They opened the bundle, beheld the jewellery with astonishment and happily wore them in a disorderly manner.<sup>9</sup> Another anecdote in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is narrated in the *Akanānūru*. Rama before embarking on his plans to cross the sea had a meeting with his army generals under a banyan tree at Rameswaram to decide on his strategy in the impending war with Ravana. At that time the birds on the tree annoyed them with their continuous chirps. Rāmā showed certain signs to them with his hands. Thereafter there prevailed perfect silence.<sup>10</sup>

Likewise some other anecdotes concerning the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* are to be found here and there in the ancient Tamil literary works. The devotional songs of the Ālvārs also narrate many incidents relating to Rama's heroic deeds as well as the entire story of *Rāmāyaṇa* in a condensed form.

### *Ālvārs and Kampar*

Ālvār's intense devotion to Rama found clear expression in their inspired songs. Especially Kulacēkar Ālvār and Tirumaṅkai Ālvār venerated the incarnation of Rama in their soul-stirring devotional poems. Kampar utilised to the maximum the underlying devotional spirit in them. Let us see how Kampar borrowed and

improved the ideas found in Tirumaṅkai Ālvār's poems. In one of the poems, he portrays Rama's love for Guha thus: "Oh Rāmā you have not rejected Guha as a poor, penniless and low person. Instead you have in compassion introduced to him Sīta and Lakshmana as his sister-in-law and brother respectively. Besides you have taken him as your brother. Since these acts of kindness to Guha fill my heart, I surrender to your feet."<sup>11</sup> While describing Rama's kindness to Hanumān, Ālvār sings in the following manner: "Oh Rāmā, you have not treated Hanumān the son of wind god as a monkey, an animal or a person belonging to a different caste. Instead with boundless affection you said to Hanumān, 'How can I repay your help? I will sit and eat with such an unblemished truthful person.' So saying you sat with him and ate the food."<sup>12</sup> Tirumaṅkai Ālvār's concept of brotherhood between Guha and Rāmā was beautifully developed in Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇa* and portrayed in the following manner. "We are the four sons born to Dasaratha. Now with the addition of Guha we are five."<sup>13</sup>

Ever since Guha met Rāmā on the banks of river Ganges, he served him with great affection. He followed him like a shadow. Even after crossing the river, he wanted to accompany Rama to the forest. It was only then that Rama addressed Guha, "You are like my life. My brother is your brother. My wife is your relative. The whole of my country is yours. I have the moral responsibility of your work. Your brother Bharata has been looking after the other relatives in Ayodhya. Kindly tell me who is here to look after the relatives? Tell me whether your relatives are not mine? Can I allow them to suffer? They are my relatives and therefore you stay here and look after them. This is my command."<sup>14</sup> The brotherly relationship of Rama and Guha was not a formal declaration when they met for the first time but an undeniable fact in Kampan's epic. When Bharata came in search of Rama to the forest, Guha was introduced to Kausalya thus: "He is Rāmā's beloved brother, but elder to Lakshmana, Satrughna and to me."<sup>15</sup> On hearing this she blessed her sons in the following manner. "Oh my sons, don't be unduly worried. Don't you think that the departure of Rāmā and Lakshmana to the forest brought some benefits? With Guha all the five of you should govern the country for years to come."<sup>16</sup> When Bharata introduced Kausalya to Guha, he addressed her as mother and paid his obeisance to her.

After showing his affection to Sugrēva, Rāmā said to him, "I regard your enemies as mine. Even if your friends are malicious they will be my friends. Likewise your relatives will remain my relatives and mine will be yours. You are my life's guardian and brother."<sup>17</sup> Again after giving refuge to Vibhēshana, Rāmā said "with Guha we have become the five sons of Dasaratha. After meeting Surgrēva we have become six brothers. Now that you have taken refuge in me we have become seven. Thus your father Dasaratha by sending me to the forest increased the number of his children."<sup>18</sup> —

With Guha we are brothers five  
 We are six with Sugreva  
 The king of montane regions.  
 Since with love you have come to us,  
 Oh Vibheshana!  
 We are now brothers seven  
 Sending me to the impenetrable forest  
 Dasaratha your father  
 Hath increased the number of his children

Kampar fully developed the concept of brotherhood, which he found in Tirumaṅkai Ālvār's devotional songs in an embryonic form. He also assiduously incorporated in the *Rāmāyaṇa* some of the subtle and most beautiful ideas found in the Ālvārs.

### *Vālmīki and Kampar*

Although Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* was the basis of Kampar's epic it was neither a translation nor a prototype of the Sanskrit work. Kampar's poetic genius made the Tamil *Rāmāyaṇa* resemble an original epic. Vālmīki depicted Rāmā and Sīta as the noble hero and heroine respectively in his work, whereas Kampar transformed them into gods and gave that impression to those who heard and read his epic. It is regarded by some scholars that only with Kampar the cult of Rāmā worship spread to the whole of the Indian sub-continent. Some scholars think that Kumarakuruparar, a poet and sanyasi from the Tamil country popularised the story of Kampar's *Rāmāyaṇa* in the Gangetic plains and only after that Tulsidās wrote his *Rāmāyaṇa*, wherein Rāmā and Sīta were characterised as venerable gods. Likewise the Tamil traders who

had established commercial contacts and trading posts in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand spread the story of Kampar's *Rāmāyaṇa* there. Even now sculptural arts and stories based on the Tamil *Rāmāyaṇa* are to be found in those countries.

Undoubtedly Kampar adopted in his work many features found in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*. However there are instances where he elaborated the original. He also created new sequences which are not found in the original. Whether they were borrowed from Vālmīki or were Kampar's own creation, they were touched by the magic wand of Kampar into things of beauty.

The portrayal of Vāli's son Aṅgada in Kampar's *Rāmāyaṇa* is a departure from Vālmīki. In fact Aṅgada's surrender is a novel feature introduced by Kampar. While Vāli was dying, he requested Rāmā to protect and look after his son. As a mark of his acceptance, Rāmā gave his sword to Aṅgada. From then Aṅgada's work was to stand by the side of Rāmā with the sword in his hand. While narrating the coronation ceremony, Kampar took particular care to mention that Aṅgada was holding the sword in his hand.<sup>19</sup>

Again Kampar's 'Māyācaṇakappaṭalam' is not to be found in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. At the Asōkavaṇa in Lanka, the demons tried crafty methods to change Sīta's mind. Among them this was one. The rākshasas created an illusory Janaka and made him appear before Sīta and entreat her to compromise with Rāvaṇa. While the deceptive Janaka was speaking, Sīta was worried that her father was to undergo these humiliations because of her. When the illusory Janaka used all sorts of blandishments to change her determination, Sīta scolded him saying "Has your mind been changed to the extent of uttering these words?"<sup>20</sup> The main purpose of creating the 'Māyācaṇakappaṭalam' was to show that the rākshasas failed miserably to change the heart of Sita in spite of such coercive measures.

According to Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sugrēva married Vāli's widow Tāra. In Kampar's *Rāmāyaṇa*, Tāra is portrayed as a noble woman leading a life of widowhood and a character worthy of praise by the women of Tamil Nadu. Likewise Sugrēva is also portrayed as a dignified character.

There is no elaborate description of Iranya in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, whereas Kampar introduced a separate chapter to narrate the story of Iranya. It is regarded by scholars as one of the most interesting chapters in the *Kamparāmāyaṇa*.



There is no premarital meeting between Rāmā and Sīta in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. But Kampar introduced a sequence by which they were able to meet each other briefly before the marriage in order to consummate it as love marriage. While Rāmā was coming with Viswāmitra along the street of Mithila, Sīta beheld him from the balcony of her palace. At the same time Rāmā also looked at her.

Their brief meeting of the eyes blossomed into love. Thus Kampar created new episodes which could not be found in the original. Some of these newly introduced incidents were sometimes retold at a later stage in the epic by one of the characters in order to give emphasis to it. Rāmā narrated this particular incident while Hanumān was preparing to go in search of Sīta in Lanka. At that time he told Hanumān to recall this incident to Sīta's mind, so that she would believe him as Rāmā's trusted messenger.<sup>21</sup>

There is a distinct difference between Vālmīki and Kampar while narrating the manner in which Rāvaṇa abducted Sīta from Panchavati. According to Vālmīki, Rāvaṇa carried off Sīta to Lanka. Kampar thought that if he were to narrate it as Vālmīki did, it would be a blot on Sīta's chastity and feared that she would lose her unique place in the hearts of Tamils. Therefore he narrated that Rāvaṇa lifted the hermitage together with Sīta and then kept her as a prisoner at Asōkavaṇam in Lanka without ever attempting to touch her physically. This subtle twist to the story was often brought to the fore by Kampar in appropriate places through other characters in the epic. First he emphasised this point through Jaṭāyu, the king of eagles, who was slain by Rāvaṇa when he intercepted his course. When Rāmā met the dying Jaṭāyu he mentioned that Rāvaṇa had carried Sīta off with the hermitage. Kampar mentioned the hermitage once again when Hanumān met Sīta at Asōkavaṇam. Here during the course of a conversation Sīta pointed out the hermitage to Hanumān. On his return Hanumān did not forget to tell Rāmā that Sīta was staying in the hermitage which had been built by his brother.<sup>22</sup>

Thus Kampar's epic differs from its original in certain important places. Wherever it differs the greatness of Tamil culture and the unique interest of the story are brought out prominently.

### *Fertility of Imagination*

Kampar possessed the genius to portray things enchantingly



whether or not Vālmīki has so described them in his work. In descriptions of natural scenery too Kampar showed his originality. While describing the *marutam* (agricultural) land he conceives its entire scene as a concert hall presided over by a king or a queen. In the cool atmosphere of the park, peacocks spread their wings and dance; the red buds and flowers of the lotus look as though they are holding bright lamps; the clouds thunder like drums, the blooming water-lilies look like the eyes of on-lookers, the waves of the ponds are like the stage curtains, and the humming of the bees resemble the background music for the dance performance. The *marutam* queen presides over the art festival at the concert hall.<sup>23</sup>

Kampar's imagination is incomparable while describing the prosperous life of the people of Kōsala. The women of Kōsala, were visions of beauty. They were rich and educated. Apart from relieving the distress of the poor and entertaining the guests, they had no other work to do. There was no fear of Yama, the god of death, since the people lived a righteous life. There was no necessity to impose penalty, since the people were upright. There was progress in the country because nothing but dharma prevailed there. In the absence of thieves, there were no guards in the country.<sup>24</sup> There were no philanthropists because of the absence of the needy; since there were no illiterates, none could be praised for their scholarship. Everyone was equal because they all were blessed with all the wealth of the world. Since there were no enemies for the country, people lost their martial spirit. Truth was not applauded because no one uttered falsehood. There was no specific merit in possessing knowledge because everyone possessed the ability to learn.

No generosity in the absence of poverty  
 No prowess in the absence of enemies  
 No truth in the absence of falsehood  
 No ignorance in the effulgence of knowledge.<sup>25</sup>

This is not a mere description of Kosala, but the vision of a great poet, who lived several centuries ago, regarding the future of a country. They are the norms of a political philosopher for an ideal country.

*Interesting Descriptions*

Kampar is a peerless artist in describing the various incidents in the epic. His power of expression comes to light in Hanumān's description of Sīta to Rāmā soon after his return from Lanka. "Oh Rāmā! I did not see merely an austere lady pining to return to her husband in Lanka. But I witnessed in her the nobility of birth, the quintessence of patience and the personification of chastity."<sup>26</sup> This clearly indicates Hanumān's eagerness to delineate Sīta's nobility and purity of character to Rāmā.

Kampar's superb artistry of expression is once again seen in the portrayal of Kumbhakarna. The war between Rāmā and Rāvaṇā had started. Kumbhakarna was fast asleep. Rāvaṇā sent his attendants to wake him up. As soon as he woke up, they informed him about the war. He was rudely shocked and exclaimed, "What! war has broken out? Is Sīta, the queen of chastity, not relieved of her grief? Have we lost our family fame and prestige that filled heaven and earth? Has our destruction come?"<sup>27</sup> Further he adds with disgust, "We have imprisoned the wife of a noble person. Yet we desire fame. We brag about self-respect and at the same time, we nourish lust. We also fear man. How wonderful is our victory!"<sup>28</sup> Rāvaṇā never expected that Kumbhakarna would hesitate to go to war and that he would offer to advise him of all persons. When he realised that one of his brothers had surrendered to the enemies, and another was advising him, he felt deeply hurt. Without losing his iron determination he said, "I went to war neither hoping that those who had already died fighting would defeat the enemies nor that others who are alive would win the war. I have not started the war expecting that brothers like you would bring me victory. Depending entirely on my own strength I have invited this great enmity."<sup>29</sup> These words give a clear picture of his steel-like heart, his fearlessness in the face of danger. Kampar pictures the mind of Rāvaṇā, who was returning after losing the battle and his own crown by an arrow, in a poem in the following manner: Rāvaṇā was not ashamed of 'the celestials', or the people because, Sīta would hear the news of his defeat and laugh at him.<sup>30</sup> With this in his mind, Rāvaṇā left the battlefield and entered the city. Kampar portrays this situation with remarkable artistry. He said, that Rāvaṇā did not leave his crown but his heroism also at the battlefield and returned empty handed to Lanka. While entering

the city he neither looked around nor at his prosperous city. He did not see those approaching him with affection. Nor did he care to see the vast army, which lay spread like an ocean before him. Although each one of his queens were looking at him he did not glance at anyone them, but walked away only looking at lady Bhūdēvi or the ground. By this elaborate description Kampan conveys, that since Rāvaṇā had lost the battle, he had also lost his heroism and self-respect, and thus did not look at anyone, but walked with his head bowed to the ground.<sup>31</sup>

Kampan's descriptions are excellent word-pictures. The introduction of conversations and the arrangement of scenes heighten the dramatic effect in the epic. The similes are also handled with novelty and beauty. He enriched the ideas found in the ancient classics like the *Tirukkural* by ingenious usage. He was a consummate Tamil stylist. He handled the language in such ways that all the beauty in it stood revealed.

### *A Style Suitable to Emotions*

In the epic one can perceive that the rhythm in poetry changes in order to indicate the qualities and emotions of the characters. Sōrpanakha's glamorous gait is graphically pictured:

*Pañciyoḷir viñcukulir pallavam aṇuṅkac  
Ceñceviya kañcanimir cīraṭiyaḷ āki  
Añcolīḷa mañṇaiyeṇa aṇṇameṇa miṇṇum  
Vañciyeṇa nañcamēṇa vañcamakaḷ vantāḷ.*<sup>32</sup>

|With lotus-like little feet  
neither comparable to the fragrant red paste  
Nor tender leaves

The venomous Sorpanakha  
Approached Rama, like a peahen,  
Like a swan, like a creeper  
And like poison.

Rāvaṇā's self-respect and anger are depicted in the following poem:

*Cuṭṭatu kuraṅkeri cūrai yāṭiṭak  
Keṭṭatu koṭinakar kiḷaiyum naṇparum  
Paṭṭaṇar paripavam paranta teṅkaṇum  
Iṭṭativ variyaṇai irunta teṇṇuṭal.*<sup>33</sup>

The monkey lighted the fire  
 Flames spread rapidly  
 The flagged Lanka city licked the dust  
 Friends and relatives too perished  
 Ignominy spread everywhere  
 Dumbfounded I sat like one  
 Dead on the throne

The very style and rhythm of the above poems unfold the emotions before the words enlighten us. While describing Lakshmana's wrath and fiery temper, Guha's eagerness and heroism and Bharata's devotion and respect Kampar's poems are not composed so much of words as charged with emotion.

We can claim that Kampar made full use of the richness of rhythm and meaning of the Tamil language. We can understand and appreciate in his poems how rhythm and meaning played their complementary roles while portraying emotions like valour, anger and sorrow. While describing the sharpness of Rāmā's arrow Kampar says "Rāmā's arrow besides piercing through Tataka (and cutting her down) it pierced through a mountain, trees and the earth." In the following poem the two words "to pierce" and "after piercing" are often repeated. By doing so, the poet is able to picture how the arrow was piercing through many objects. At the same time he succeeds in making the readers realise the intense keenness of the arrow.

*Alaiuruvak kaṭaluruvaṭ tāṇṭakaitaṇ nīṇṭuyarnta*  
*Nilaiuruvap puyavalimai nīuruva nōkkaiyā*  
*Ulaiuruvak kaṇalumilkaṇ tāṇṭakaitaṇ uramurivi*  
*Malaiuruvi maramurivi maṇuruvirru oruvāli.<sup>34</sup>*

While describing the scene of Rāvaṇā's death and how the body was lying on the battlefield, Kampar used the word "subside" often to imprint on the reader's mind Rāvaṇā's heroism. The purport of that soulstirring poem is as follows: "Rāvaṇā's anger, analogous to a fierce lion's subsided. His mind subsided. He became inactive. The long powerful hands responsible for the annihilation of the enemies lost their heroic actions. His lustful cravings subsided. His grit wore away. Now dead on the battlefield, Rāvaṇā's face shone three times brighter than when he subdued the leadership and austerities of hermits who had controlled their senses."

*Vemmaṭaṅkal vekunṭaṇaiya ciṇamaṭaṅka*  
*maṇamaṭaṅka viṇaiyum viyat*  
*Temmaṭaṅkap poruṭaṭakkaic ceyalaṭaṅka*  
*mayalaṭaṅka ārral tēyat*  
*Tamaṭaṅku muṇivaraiyum talaiṭaṅka*  
*nilaiṭaṅkac cāytta nālin*  
*Mummaṭaṅku polintaṇaam muraituraṇtān*  
*Uyirturaṇta mukaṅkaḷ amma.*<sup>35</sup>

Ceased Ravana's, leonine-like anger  
 Abated the tumult of his mind, perished his  
 wickedness  
 His arms had routed foes,  
 Lust for Sita disappeared  
 Strength to vanquish enemies effaced  
 The unrighteous Ravana's faces  
 That lay dead on the battle field  
 Shone thrice as beautiful on the day  
 When he brought under control even hermits  
 Who had controlled their senses.

Since Kampar was so moved by the scene of Rāvaṇā's deaths, where his bravery, anger and actions lay subdued, one Tamil word *aṭaṅka* has been repeated several times to touch the readers heart. Rāvaṇā subdued everyone, including the hermits who had conquered the senses. Though his bravery, anger and actions were subdued, Kampar highlights, that his face shone brighter now. There was not such a glow on his face before because his bravery, anger and actions were wrongly used. Now purged of all evils his face shone three times brighter than the polished gem stone. Thus one can see that the poems possesses the uniqueness of rhythm, free flow of emotion and subtlety of meaning.

Likewise every part of Kampar's *Rāmāyaṇa* is interesting because of the choice of words, the refinement of meaning and the fertility of imagination. There is an old poem which pays a glowing tribute to Kampar's craftsmanship as an epic poet. It says that however much one were to obtain all the wealth and power to rule the world as well as enjoy the pleasure of sheltering under the heavenly *karpakam* tree, they will not give happiness to the



learned minds like the poems of Kampar's *Rāmāyaṇa*.<sup>36</sup>

### *Auvaiyār*

The poetess Auvaiyār is well known to the educated and the uneducated in the Tamil country. The term Auvaiyār means an elderly lady who could well occupy the position of a mother. Some of the poetesses of the Tamil country were known by this name. Auvaiyār was one among the thirty poetesses of the *Caṅkam* period. She moved with the Cēra, Cōla and Paṇḍya kings, as well as the local chiefs like Pāri and Atiyamāṇ. She was an intimate friend of Atiyamāṇ, a chieftain ruling Takatūr. When there was a conflict between Atiyamāṇ and Toṇṭaimāṇ, Auvaiyār went to Tontaiman as Atiyamāṇ's envoy to prevent a possible war.<sup>37</sup> She was very old then. To prolong her life, Atiyamāṇ offered her a rare *Nelli* fruit, which had in fact been given to him to lengthen his own span of life. Auvaiyār immortalized this noble gesture in an interesting poem in the *Puṛaṇāṇūru*.<sup>38</sup> She composed fifty poems in all and they are found in the *Puṛaṇāṇūru* and other anthologies. They speak in volumes about her rich poetic talents and ripe worldly knowledge.

Tradition avers the existence of another Auvaiyār, who was a devotee of Śiva and lived during the period of Nāyaṇmārs. There seem to have lived another Auvaiyār during the period of Kampar and Oṭṭakkūttar. In the minds of Tamils she lives as a grand old lady. She was the most famous among the Auvaiyārs in Tamil literature. The first one who lived in the *Caṅkam* period, had been the court poet of the rulers of the country. The medieval period Auvaiyār was the court poet of the Cōla monarch. She moved very closely with the chieftains of the Tamil country. Besides, she travelled from one part of the country to another and from one village to another, sharing the gruel of the poor farmers and composing songs for their enjoyment. She is till now praised for living with the toiling masses and sharing their frugal fare. She was nick-named as "the poetess who sang for the gruel". She found great happiness in the life of small children. Her works, the *Ātticcūti* and *Koṇṛaivēntaṇ* written for children (of primary classes), are even now generally read and enjoyed by them. There is none among the Tamils who does not know these two works, or at least a few lines in them. Her two other works, the *Mūturai*

and the *Nalvali* were written for (Secondary) school children. All the four works are didactic in character. They explain the basic wisdom that should govern mundane life. How her works intended for children have been appreciated by generations of people will be known if one considers one of Pāratiyār's works. (In the early part of the twentieth century Pāratiyār followed the tradition created by Auvaiyār and borrowed the title of one of her works and composed his poetical work entitled the *Neo-Atticcūṭi*). Only Auvaiyār's ethical works are deservedly popular among a large section of people in the Tamil country.

Many occasional poems attributed to Auvaiyār are available now. Several stories and events relating to the origins of those poems are also current among the people. They are so mixed up with legends that it is now impossible to classify whether or not they are historical. However both the stories and the poems are pregnant with meaning and useful for mundane life. They undoubtedly brought much fame to her. She attained great fame without writing an epic like Kampar and other poets.

Works such as *Kalviyolukkam*, *Nannūrkkōvai*, *Pantaṇantāti*, *Arunṭamilmālai*, *Taricaṇappattu*, and *Acatikkōvai* are ascribed to Auvaiyār. None of them is now available, except some verses in *Acatikkōvai*.

Auvaiyār emphasised in all her works that one should live by helping the poor. She condemned the habit of amassing, hoarding and concealing wealth. She contented that one should live a content and frugal life, however meagre his earnings might be. She lived without respecting the rulers of the country. However she earned a great reputation by living close to the people. When she wrote, "never respect those who don't respect you",<sup>39</sup> Auvaiyār spoke from her own experience in life. She said, "never accept any help from those who are unwilling to give you with kindness."<sup>40</sup> Auvaiyār laid great stress on good company. Therefore she advised, that if one aspired to come up in life, he should seek the company of good people. In other words, "count the company of virtuous people" Further she said, "to see righteous people, to hear their words, and to be in their company would bring enormous good."<sup>41</sup> She spoke in some places of the impermanence of worldly things including wealth. However she never hesitated to appreciate the family way of life. According to her in an ideal family both husband and wife should be bound by affection and hold similar

views. Otherwise it would be better for them to lead a life of renunciation. In this connection she went to the extent of saying that it is harmful to eat the food given by an unkind woman. While speaking about knowledge she said, that the world of knowledge is limitless; what one can learn in one's life-time is infinitesimally small; what one has learnt is as limited as a mere handful of sand; what one as to learn is infinite like the universe. Therefore one should not boast of one's learning. Those who have realised the full extent of knowledge will remain the personification of humility. While offering advice to children she said, that parents should be regarded as gods; to show love and affection to the mother is greater than temple worship; and the father's advice is greater than the greater *mantras* (sayings). Generally speaking, all her works speak of high ideals useful for the common man in a simple and clear style.

One other work, the *Nāṇakkural* is also attributed to Auvaiyār. It differs markedly in many respects from her other works. Neither her extensive knowledge of the world nor her infinite compassion are to be found in this work. But it expresses the experiences of a mature philosopher, when it analyses the characteristics of life and the path of yoga. The author of this work might be different from the Auvaiyār mentioned earlier. The *Vināyakarakaval* is yet another work attributed to her. It is essentially a devotional work, which some people use as a book of prayer for the worship of Lord Vināyaka. Again the author of this work must be different from other Auvaiyārs.

### *Nikaṇṭukals and Grammatical Works*

During the medieval period besides literary works many *Nikaṇṭukals* and grammatical works were also written as aids to the study of literature. The *Nikaṇṭukals* give synonyms and several meanings for a word under different sub-titles like human beings, animals, birds, trees, plants and creepers. Till the end of nineteenth century these *nikaṇṭukals* were very useful for scholars. With the advent of European scholars, dictionaries were compiled. Since then *Nikaṇṭukals* lost their usefulness. Some of the ancient *Nikaṇṭukals* were *Cūṭamaṇi*, *Tivākaram*, *Piṅkalantai*, and *Kayātaram*.

Some among the many grammatical works are still in popular use. Some of the important ones are the *Vīracōliyam*,

*Nampiyakapporuḷ; Yāpparunkalam, Yāpparunkalak-kārikai, Nēminātam, Vaccaṇantimālai, Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram* and *Nannūḷ*. Many grammatical works that were written after the *Tolkāppiyam* are no longer available. The *Viracōḷiyam* followed the *Tolkāppiyam* and other Sanskrit works to frame grammatical rules for the Tamil language. The author of the works ignored some of the rules laid down in the *Tolkāppiyam* for medials and other aspects of grammar. This work points out the root and the suffix in all verbs. It further points out that the suffix would indicate time, gender, sex, number and person in any verb. Next to the *Viracōḷiyam* came the *Nannūḷ*. It followed as far as possible the *Tolkāppiyam* and the Tamil tradition in formulating rules for letters and words in Tamil language. They are classified in a simple and clear manner. Therefore the *Nannūḷ* is read even today. When it became popular, the *Viracōḷiyam* lost its importance. The *Purapporuḷ-venpā-mālai* speaks about heroism, generosity and other aspects of man's external life while the *Nampiyakapporuḷ* deals with love and other related aspects of man's inner life. Both the *Yāpparunkalam* and the *Yāpparunkalak-kārikai* exemplify prosody and poetics. The grammar for letters and words is given in the *Nēminātam*. Another work the *Vaccaṇantimālai* or the *Venpāppāṭṭiyal* explains the suitability of the first syllable in a work as well as the format of various types of works. The *Pāṭṭiyal* also deals with similar themes. According to it the hero's caste and his birth star should be taken into consideration while forming the first syllable. It also stipulates that the number of poems in the work should correspond to the four-fold caste system. In other words the length of the work is determined by the hero's caste. These grammatical rules are not only unsuitable but also a hindrance to the natural growth of literature. It is now intriguing to note how rules unsuitable to the natural growth of literature have crept into Tamil. In fact *Pāṭṭiyal* type of works such as *Paṇṇirupāṭṭiyal* and others were a new genre in Tamil. It is heartening to note however that works of this nature have been totally rejected by generations of scholars.

The *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram* was based on the famous Sanskrit author Dandin's superb manual of rhetoric *Kāvyādarśa*. The author of the Tamil work not only adopted the subject matter of the Sanskrit work but the very name of its author as his own. Both the authors were Tamils. The explanations regarding *kauṭamārga*



and *vaidarpamārga* found in Sanskrit are also found in the Tamil version of *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*. It gives the basic rule for the composition of epics as well as an in-depth analysis of various types of speech in Tamil. It also gives a clear description of *yamakam*, *tiripu* and other types of word embellishments. Mention is made about an ornamental type of versification known in Tamil as the *cittirakavakaḷ*. The modern scholars have unanimously rejected artificial word embellishments as unsuitable to literary growth. It is clear from the Tamil literary works that eminent poets did not favour unnecessary sport with words in poetry.

The main aim of poetry is to give beautiful expression to one's imagination and feeling. Jugglery of words has no place. While giving form to imagination and feeling, words might flow naturally to adorn the beauty of a poem. In such cases words are beautifully formed in an effortless manner confining to certain rhythm in the poem. Word embellishments occur rarely in a work. For example in the *Caṅkam* classics word embellishments are a few. The talent of the *Caṅkam* poets was confined to word pictures to express their imagination and feelings. In their poems, in some lines certain words are repeated without undue effort to heighten their beauty and charm.

The following poem from the *Aiṅkurunūru* portrays the grief of a mother, whose daughter had eloped with her lover. When the mother after a futile search saw the many things her daughter had used while at home, her grief overwhelmed her.

*Ituen pāvaik kiṇiya naṇ pāvai*  
*Ituen painkili eṭutta painkili*  
*Ituen pūvaik kiṇiyacor pūvai.*<sup>42</sup>

This was the pretty doll that delighted  
 my daughter  
 This was the pet parrot that was fondled  
 by my daughter  
 This was the melodious bird that enchanted  
 my daughter

In the foregoing poem one important word in every line is repeated twice. These words are *pāvai*, *painkili* and *pūvai* in the first, second and third lines respectively. In that order they mean doll, parrot and *nākaṇavāippuḷ*, a bird known for its sweet voice.



However each one of these words is used in a line with two different meanings. When the words *pāvai*, *paiṅkiḷi* and *pūvai* appear at the beginning of a line they mean simply 'daughter' and at the end of the line they mean doll, parrot and *nākaṇavāippuḷ* respectively.

*Cērtutaṇ ceṇinta kuṇaṅkiṇ kuṇaṅkeṇa*  
*Mālvarai oḷukiya vālai vāḷaip*  
*Pūveṇap polinta ōti*<sup>43</sup>

In the foregoing lines two words are repeated twice in the first two lines. In the first line the word *kuṇaṅku* is repeated often with the same meaning 'thigh'. In the second line the word *vālai* is also repeated twice to mean differently. The first one means 'to live without perishing' and the second one means like a 'banana'. Repetition of words are found only in a few places in the *Caṅkam* literature to embellish poems. However such repetitions are not employed for purposes of mere ornamentation.

*Akavaṇ makulē akavaṇ makaḷē*  
*Maṇavukkōp paṇṇa naṇṇetuṇ kūntal*  
*Akavaṇ makaḷē pātuka pāṭṭē*  
*Inṇum pātuka pāṭṭē avar*  
*Naṇṇetuṇ kuṇṇam pāṭiya pāṭṭē.*<sup>44</sup>

Oh Shaman! Oh Shaman!  
 With a long plaited hair  
 Resembling a white string of conch,  
 Sing again the song  
 What praised the hero's mountain

*Uḷḷiṇeṇ allenō yāṇē ulli*  
*Niṇaintaṇen allenō peritē niṇaintu*  
*Maruṇṇaṇeṇ allenō ulakattup paṇṇē*<sup>45</sup>

Repetition of words like *pātuka pāṭṭē*, *pātuka pāṭṭē* and *pāṭiya pāṭṭē* (in the first poem) and *allenō* (thrice in the second poem) are found in the foregoing poems. One can realise that such repetition of words occur naturally in the above mentioned poems owing to the emotional words spoken by the heroine.

Ornamentation of words is negligible even during the period of epics like the *Cilappatikāram*. However there are a few lines in the *Maṇimēkalai*, which give the impression that lines are

artificially repeated to create some rhythm.

Valampuric caṅkam varitēlun tārppap  
 Pulampuric caṅkam poruḷoṭu mullaṅkap  
 Pukarmuka vāraṇam neṭuṅkū viḷippap  
 Porimayir vāraṇam kuṇaṅkū viḷippap  
 Paṇainilaip puravi palvelun tālap  
 Paṇainilaip pulḷum palavelun tālap  
 Pūmpoli lārkaip pulḷoli cirappap  
 Pūkoṭi yārikaip pulloli cirappak  
 Kaṭavul pīṭikaip pūppali kaṭaikkolāk  
 Kalampakar pīṭikaip pūppali kaṭaikkolāk  
 Kuyiluvār kaṭaitorūm paṇṇiyam parantelāk  
 Koṭuppōr kaṭaitorūm paṇṇiyam parantela.<sup>46</sup>

We find the play of words for the first time in the foregoing lines of the epic *Maṇimēkalai*. However during the pre-epic period jugglery of words was very rare.

Many types of word-play found a place in the devotional songs of Nāyaṇmārs and Ālvārs. Tirumaṅkai Ālvār composed a song in which one can find a certain type of word ornamentation known as *Tiruvelukūṟṟirukkai*. Tiruṇāṇacampantar and Nakkīratēva Nāyaṇār also composed this type of ornamental poems. They are known as *cittirakavi* or poems that can be written like a picture. Another type of *cittirakavi* is known as *ratapantam* in which letters from the beginning to the end of a poem is divided into seven parts and this will form the outer part of the *rata* or car. The letters from the end to the beginning of a poem is divided into seven parts forming the basement of the *rata*. Nāṇacampantar composed another type of *cittirakavi* known as *ēkapātam*. In such verses a line will be repeated four times or folded into four lines with certain variations of words. And at the same time meaning will differ from one line to another. For example if the line "*pirama puratturai pemmāṇ emmāṇ*"<sup>47</sup> is repeated four times it is known as *ēkapātam*. Another type of *cittirakavi* verse is *mālaīmārru*. It can be read from the beginning to the end or vice versa but the verse will read the same. Besides *mālai-mārru*, Tiruṇāṇacampantar wrote six *patikams* of *maṭakku* type of *cittira kavikal*. In addition he composed four *patikams* of *yamakam* type of verses, two *patikams* of *cakkaramārru cittirakavikal* and one *patikam* of *kōmūttiri cittirakavi*. Such ornamental verses full of word jugglery became popular from Tiruṇāṇacampantar's time. The authors of the

*Taṇṭiyulaṅkāram* and the *Māṇalaṅkāram* wrote rules and explantations for these *cittirakavikal*. They found a place in certain literary works like *kalampakams* and *purāṇams*. However renowned poets like Kampar and Cēkkiḷār shunned these types of verses. The *cittirakavikal*'s can neither be easily understood nor appreciated. Scholars find only jugglery of words in them. There is no subtlety of meaning or imagination. As such twentieth century scholars like V.K. Cūriyanārāyaṇa Sastriyar and Pāratīyār rejected all types of *cittirakavikal* as unsuitable for creative literature.

### NOTES

1. P.V. Cōmacuntaraṇār and Pulavar Aracu (ed.), *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, Reprint (Madras, 1974), pm 309, p. 173.
2. P.V. Cōmacuntaraṇār (ed.), *Valaiyāpati, Kuṇṭalakēci* and *Uṭayanakumāra Kāviyam*, Reprint, (Madras, 1973), p. 107.
3. Palur Kannappa Mudaliar (ed.), *Cekkilar Pillaittamil*, 1st edn (Madras, 1964), p. 312.
4. Saiva Siddhanta Mahasamajam, *Tiruttonṭar Purāṇam* (Periyapurāṇam), Tirukkuttai (Madras 1950) p. 20.
5. *Ibid.*, *Kannappa Nayanār Purāṇam*, p. 105.
6. *Ibid.*, *Tatuttakkontu Purāṇam*, p. 46.
7. *Ibid.*, *Karaikkalammaiṭṭar Purāṇam*, p. 242.
8. *Paratiyar, Paratiyar Kavitaikal*, 3rd edn (Madras 1977), pm 20.
9. *PN*, pm 378 : 18–20, pp. 163–64.
10. *AN*, pm 70 : 14–17, p. 45.
11. R. Venkatacami Reddiyar (ed.), *Nalayira Tivviyappirapantam*, pm. 1418 p. 311.
12. *Ibid.*, pm 1419, p. 311.
13. Kampan Kalakam (edition), *Kamparāmāyaṇam (Irāmāvatāram)* (Madras, 1976), *Kukap-paṭalam*, pm 43, p. 324.
14. *Ibid.*, *Kukap-paṭalam*, pms 44–45, p. 325.
15. *Ibid.*, *Kaṅkai-kāṇ-paṭalam*, pm 65, p. 377.
16. *Ibid.*, *Kaṅkai-kāṇ-paṭalam*, pm 66, P. 377.
17. *Ibid.*, *Naṭpukkōṭi-paṭalam*, pm 27, p. 606.
18. *Ibid.*, *Vīṭaṇaṇ-āṭaikkalap-paṭalam*, pm 143, p. 1032.
19. *Ibid.*, *Tirumuṭi-cūṭṭup-paṭalam*, pm 38, p. 1594.
20. *Ibid.*, *Māyā-caṇakap-paṭalam*, pms 61–69, pp. 1206–7.
21. *Ibid.*, *Nāṭa-viṭṭa-paṭalam*, pm 67, p. 708.
22. *Ibid.*, *Tiruvaṭi-toḷuta-paṭalam*, pm 31, p. 938.

23. *Ibid.*, *Nāṭṭup-paṭalam*, pm 4, p. 8.
24. *Ibid.*, *Nāṭṭup-Paṭalam*, pms 36, 38, and 39, pp. 13-14.
25. *Ibid.*, *Nāṭṭup-paṭalam*, pm 53, p. 16.
26. *Ibid.*, *Tiruvaṭi-toḷuta-paṭalam*, pm 29, p. 938.
27. *Ibid.*, *Kumpakarunaṇ-vataip-paṭalam*, pms 79, p. 1153.
28. *Ibid.*, *Kumpakarunaṇ-vataip-paṭalam*, pms 80-83, p. 1153.
29. *Ibid.*, *Intiracittu-vataip-paṭalam*, pm 8, p. 1417.
30. *Ibid.*, *Kumpakarunaṇ-vataip-paṭalam*, pm 11, p. 1143.
31. *Ibid.*, *Kumpakarunaṇ-vataip-paṭalam*, pm 3, p. 1142.
32. *Ibid.*, *Cūrppaṇakaip-paṭalam*, pm 31, p. 445.
33. *Ibid.*, *Irāvaṇaṇ-mantirap-paṭalam*, pm 12, p. 968.
34. *Ibid.*, *Kulamurai-kilattu-paṭalam*, pm 26, p. 107.
35. *Ibid.*, *Irāvaṇaṇ-vataip-paṭalam*, pm 199, p. 1532.
36. Kampan Kalakam (ed.), *Kamparamayanam Iramavataram, Taniyan* (Madras, 1976) p. 13, p. 209.
37. *PN*, pm 95 p. 51.
38. *PN*, pm 91, pp. 49-50.
39. K., Cuppiramaniya Pillai (ed.), *Tanippatarriratu*, pt. I, 1st edn (Madras, 1953), pm . 42, p. 20.
40. *Ibid.*, pm 42, p. 20.
41. Saiva Siddhanta Publisher (ed.), *Atticuti*, 2nd edn (Madras 1953), p. 17; *Muturai*, 10th edn (Madras, 1952), p. 9.
42. Murray & Co. (ed), *Aiṅkurunūru* (Madras, 1957), pm. 375, pp. 80-81.
43. Murray & Co. (ed.), *Pattuppāṭṭu* (Madras, 1957), pm 3 : 20-22, p. 34.
44. *KT*, pm 23, pp. 11-12.
45. *KT*, pm 99 : 1-3, p. 28.
46. U.V Cāmināta Iyer (ed.), *Maṇimēkalai*, fifth edn (Madras, 1956), 7 : 113-124, pp. 94-95.
47. *NT*, pm. 1, p. 541.

## Religious Works (1100–1700 A.D.)

### *Literature During Foreign Rule*

Soon after the glorious periods of Cēkkiḷār and Kampar, there was chaos and confusion in the Tamil country for lack of able rulers. The Cōḷa dynasty was at the nadir. Even the Pāṇḍya rulers were unable to reassert their supremacy in the country. The Hoysala rulers of Mysore extended their sway over the Tamil country. In the first half of the fourteenth century, Malik Kafur (1310 A.D.), the commander of the North Indian ruler Alauddin, invaded the South, defeated the rulers and disturbed peace in the Tamil country. The Pāṇḍya country was under the rule of Malik Kafur and his descendants for fifty years. Till the Vijayanagar empire was established in Andhra, there was no peace in the Tamil country. Afterwards the whole of South India passed under the paramount rule of the Vijayanagar kings. Their vassals, the Nāyaks, established a kingdom in Madurai. With the advent of their rule, there was once again a revival of literature and fine arts. Even the Cōḷa country came under their suzerainty. Afterwards the Cōḷa territory or the southern part of the Tamil country passed into the hands of the Marathā rulers, while the northern part came under the control of the Nawabs of Carnatic. The country was torn by political struggles and wars. And there was little scope for peace in the country. Consequently after the thirteenth century neither poets of great eminence like Cēkkiḷār and Kampar nor great literary



works like their epics emerged. When the Nāyaks became the rulers of the country they patronised arts and religious literature.

poets and scholars wrote original works as well as commentaries on the then existing religious books. At the same time religious institutions or *mutts* were established throughout the country. These in turn gave a fresh fillip to religious and literary activities. Poets wrote mainly *talapurāṇas* for the enjoyment of people living in a particular area. Many minor works were written to make the rich as well as the local rulers feel happy. Some among them were pure laudatory works, while others were pornographic in nature. Works on similar themes were written under the patronage of the Maratha rulers who ruled from Tanjavur. Even during this period some *cittars* or self-realised souls lived, caring little for rich and petty rulers and wrote works bringing out their spiritual experiences in a simple style. Tattuvarāyar and other philosophers lived and composed works of this nature.

Even during this turbulent period there was no dearth of poetic talent in the country. And poets composed newer types of literary pieces with limited scope and conception. Poets of eminence like Aruṇakiriyār and Villiputtūrār composed several thousands of poems. Highly imaginative poets like Kālamēkam wrote many interesting verses. Distinguished poets like Kumarakuruparar and Civappirakācar wrote different kinds of religious works, known for their many literary features. Despite political turmoil literary activity was not unduly hampered owing to the firm literary foundation that had been laid over the centuries. To put it figuratively the literary grove was not unduly destroyed. Although much benefit was not derived from the grove its greenery did not altogether change. New leaves appeared and matured. Trees sent out buds and some of them bloomed. And fruits also appeared in small quantities.

### *Cittar's Poems*

During this period some illumined souls known in Tamil as *cittars* gave poetic form to their realisations of truth in a language easily understood by the people. Poet Tirumūlar and others, who lived in the sixth century A.D., were among them. There are some who consider that even Akattiyar (Agastya) as belonging to such a group of *cittars*. There were two Akattiyars; one was the famous author of the Tamil grammatical work *Akattiyam* and the other

was one among the many *citta* herbalists. Though most of the *cittars* were Śaivites, they were beyond the periphery of caste and religion. They were rationalists and rejected all types of rituals and ceremonies. Their main aim in life was to express their deep spiritual experiences to the people at large. They were not mere philosophers but true self-realised souls. Some among them distinguished themselves as great yogis and experts in herbal medicine. The system of medicine that they propounded has come down to the Tamils as Siddha Medicine. The *cittars* cared little for grammatical rules in their literary compositions, for they were not meant for scholars. As a result they liberally used folk poetry forms, oral traditions and colloquial words and phrases in their verses. Some of their verses have hidden meanings too. Invariably their verses give both an overt and a covert meaning. A casual reading of a verse would give a simple meaning while a careful study would reveal a profound thought. Even in their verses on medicine, names of herbs are not mentioned in their appropriate medical terms. For example herbs like *tāḷicapattiram* and *vallāraikkīrai* were respectively mentioned as *caivam* and *caracuvati*. Since words like these give an altogether different meaning in verses they are not easily comprehensible without training from a traditional master.

Even today such *cittars'* poems are sung by street singers in Tamil Nadu. There are many people in the country who learn with no small interest the poems of Pāmpāṭṭic-cittar, Akappēyccittar, Alukaṇic-cittar, Kutampaic-cittar and Kaṭuvelic-cittar. The following poem was composed by Pāmpāṭṭic-cittar.

*Uṭtaik kuḷitaṇilē maṇṇai eṭuttē*  
*Utirap puṇalilē uṇṭai cērttē*  
*Vāyṭta kuyavaṇār paṇṇu pāṇṭam*  
*Varaiōṭukkum ākāteṇṇu āṭupāmpē.*

(Meanings of some words used in the poem referred to above: *Uṭtaik kuḷi*=dirty pit, seminal sac; *Maṇ*=mud, semen; *Utirap puṇal*=bloody discharge; *Kuyavaṇār*=potter, Brahma; *Paṇṇu pāṇṭam*=vessel made by; *ōṭu*=tile)

The esoteric meaning of the poem is as follows:

The dirty pit referred to in the foregoing poem is the seminal sac. And semen is referred to as mud, for fresh semen has the

smell of earth. The egg that escapes from the ovary and flows through the fallopian tube is referred to as *utirappunāl*, which literally means the bloody discharge. The potter stands for Brahma, who is responsible for the creation of beings. Thus the birth of the child is indicated by the term 'the vessel made by the potter.' To state that not all children attain spiritual heights the *cittar* mentions the ceiling which, in fact, symbolises the *Sakesrarapita* to which kundalini power is aroused for spiritual bliss.

The literal meaning of the poem is as follows: Whatever is made by the potter by mixing the clay dug out from a dirty pit with soiled water may not be useful even as a tile.

The foregoing poem speaks about the origin of the human body and its futility. *Ītaikkāṭṭuṭ-cittar*'s verses are composed as if the cowherds address their cows and their leaders whereas the central theme revolves around God and the path to eternal knowledge. In *Akappēy-cittar*'s poems the human mind is personified as a ghost. *Kutampaic-cittar* was known as such because his verses were addressed to a woman wearing the earring *kutampai*. The following poems are written by *Kutampaic-cittar*.

*Māṅkāyp pālunṭi<sup>1</sup> malaimēl iruppōrkkut*  
*Tēṅkāyappāl ētukkaṭi—kutampāy*  
*Tēṅkāyppāl ētukkaṭi<sup>2</sup>.*

(*Māṅkāippāl* symbolizes spiritual bliss or a state of timelessness attained by 'kundalini yoga'. *Tēṅkāippāl* denotes a similar state of mind attained for a brief period either through sex or by drugs. The *cittars* pursue the former course for lasting happiness).

*Uḷḷāṅkāl veḷḷelumpu ākat tiriyyinum*  
*Vaḷḷalaik kāṇuvaiyō—kutampāy*  
*Vaḷḷalaik kāṇuvaiyō.<sup>3</sup>*

In this poem the *cittar* raises the question whether one could realise the Supreme by merely performing severe austerities. The implied answer is no. The term *uḷḷāṅkāl veḷḷelumpu* refers to severe austerities.

Although words like mango, coconut and milk (*māṅkai tēṅkai, pāl*, respectively) which appear in the first poem are commonly used and easily understood, they are used by *Kutampaic-cittar* with an esoteric meaning. Likewise many poems of the *cittars*,

though written in a simple and clear style, are pregnant with inner meaning.

### *Śaiva Sastras*

The devotional works of Nāyaṇmārs are meant to be recited and therefore they are known in Tamil as *tōttira nūlkal* or works meant for recitation. Enlightened scholars like Uyyavanta-tēvanāyaṇār's and others wrote fourteen works in the twelfth, the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries A.D., which are regarded as the metaphysical texts for the Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy. The authors of these works were erudite scholars. They were able to evaluate the needs of their times realistically and were able to write metaphysical rather than literary works. Most of the philosophical works were written in a traditional literary style. Uyyavantatēvanāyaṇār's *Tiruvuntiyār* is based on a type of folk song, sung by women while playing a game repeating the word *untipara*. The work explains noble religious thoughts in a beautiful poetic form. Another work, *Tirukkalīrruppāṭiyār* is written by a scholar who came in the tradition of Nāyaṇmārs. The *Civaṇāṇapōtam*, which happens to be the basic text of the Śaiva Siddhānta Philosophy, explains the triple truths of *pati* (God), *pacu* (soul), and *pācam* (bonds). Its author is Meykaṇṭār. The work contains twelve terse *sutras*. Among the forty-nine disciples of Meykaṇṭār, Aruṇanti Civāccāriyar is one. His work *Civananacit-tiyar* contains 328 verses. The Śaivites regard his *Irupā Irupakṭu* as an important *Śastra*. Umapati Civaccariyar is the author of *Civappirakācam* another interesting philosophical work of the Śaiva canon. He has to his credit seven metaphysical works, two *talapurāṇams* and other works including the *Cēkkiḷār Purāṇam*. The latter work tells the life story of Cēkkiḷār. Manavacakam Katantar's *Uṇmai Viḷakkam* is yet another notable metaphysical work.

### *Taṇcaivāṇaṇ Kōvai*

During this period, Poyyāmoḷiyār, a notable poet, composed the poetical work *Taṇcaivāṇaṇ Kōvai*. It narrates the love story of two imaginative lovers. It belongs to the *kōvai* genre. All the four hundred poems of this work mention the name of a feudatory king who ruled at a place called Taṇcākkūr.

Every one of the verses in *Taṇcaivāṇaṇ Kōvai* portrays an



incident. The parents are ignorant about the love affair of their daughter, the heroine of the work. When they notice certain physical changes, they think it to be a disease and plan to treat it. But the maid, who knows the real cause of the distress, reveals it to the heroine's parents at the appropriate time. The maid relates the story thus:

One day while we were spending our time at the grove a wild elephant began to chase us. We were frightened and raised a hue and cry. At that time a brave young man appeared before, us, pulled your daughter to his left side, threw a spear at the charging elephant and stopped it. When the spear pierced through the elephant's body, the blood splashed on his right side. At the same time the tears of your daughter mingled with the black-linings and drenched his left side. Do you know how he looked at that time? He resembled Siva with his consort Umadavi on his left.,<sup>4</sup>

Everyone of the poems in *Taṇcaiyāṇaṇ kōvai* highlights either an incident or an emotional situation. Thus all the four hundred poems in it narrate the story in a methodical sequence. Many of the poems in this work are known for flights of the imagination.

### *Scholiasts*

New additions in the form of sculptured *maṇḍapas* as well as panels were added to the then existing temples and buildings respectively during this period. Likewise elaborate commentary and glosses were added to the entire body of religious literature. In the same way the renowned ancient literary works got re-embellished with the additions of commentators' erudite commentaries.

The scholiasts who were without exception erudite, did yeoman service to the growth and preservation of literature. Only in their writings we note the existence of prose in Tamil. In the eighth century A.D. in Nakkīrar's commentary on *Kaḷaviyal*, appear the earliest Tamil prose which resembles poetry in its measured arrangements of syllables, and the liberal use of alliterations and assonances. Iḷampūraṇar's *Tolkāppiyam* is the next oldest available commentary. The succeeding generation of scholiasts



never mentioned Iḥampūraṇar by name but simply called him Uraiyaṁcīriyar or 'the commentator', thus acknowledging his greatness. In contrast to Nakkīrar's florid style, Iḥampūraṇar's is simple and clear. He belonged to the twelfth century A.D. In the thirteenth century Pēraṁcīriyar wrote a commentary on a section of *Tolkāppiyam* and on *Tirukkōvaiyār* in full. The style of his commentaries is known for its terseness. Cēṇāvariyaṁ's commentary on the second section of *Tolkāppiyam* is known for its sophistry. He was also a consummate scholar in Sanskrit. Naccīṇārkkīṇiyar is another commentator with a reputation for scholarship in Sanskrit. He furnished many literary texts and grammatical works with glosses and thereby rendered notable service to the cause of Tamil. His commentaries are not direct but highly involved. Meaning and interpretations are given by linking two separate words found in two different lines in a text. Scholars in general regard this as a defect in his commentaries. Despite this, they reveal his erudite scholarship and skill as a commentator. The style is magnificent with a rare beauty. All the foregoing commentators have quoted profusely from old classical works. Only from these quotations we now know the names of many extinct works.

The names of ancient works on music and drama are known from Aṭiyārkkunallār's commentary on *Cilappatikāram*. Though the entire wealth of fine arts of Tamil Nadu could not be known from the commentary, it however helps to clear the obscurity about them. There had been an old commentary prior to Aṭiyārkkunallār's. Both these commentaries have been known for their splendid prose style. In both alliterations and assonances are kept to the minimum and the subject matter is explained with clarity.

There are ten scholars including Maṇakkutaṭavar who wrote commentaries on *Tirukkural*. The outstanding among them is Parimēlaḷakar. He had the tendency to write the commentary either by closely following the ideas found in Sanskrit works or by comparing with them. As a result in some places, Tiruvalḷuvar's views are not clearly brought out. Despite this shortcoming, Parimēlaḷakar was responsible for pointing out the depth of meaning and sophistry in *Tirukkural*.

Parimelaḷakar belonged to the fourteenth century A.D. Besides, *Tirukkuraḷ* he has written a commentary on the *Caṅkam* work, *Paripāṭal*. The commentary on *Tirukkuraḷ* brought him fame. He is regarded as the greatest scholiast in Tamil. His com-

mentary on *Tirukkuraḷ* reveals his keen perception, understanding and rare ability to interpret and explain intricate ideas found in *kuraḷ venpas*. Despite certain defects pointed out earlier, his commentary has succeeded in highlighting innumerable finer and delicate points in *Tirukkuraḷ*. Unnecessary adjectives have no place in his writing. In short the prose style is known for its brevity, terseness and clarity. Parimēlaḷakar's prose style is eminently suitable to express scientific ideas. The Śaivite scholar Umāpati Civācāriyār, a great admirer of Parimēlaḷakar's commentary, while listing the major works in Tamil, included Parimēlaḷakar's commentary as an independent work along with *Tirukkuraḷ*. Besides this, Tirumēṇi Irattiṇa Kavirāyar's *Nuṇporuḷ Mālai*, written in the seventeenth century, explains all the rare ideas found in Parimēlaḷakar's commentary. All these indicate clearly the greatness and importance of Parimēlaḷakar's commentary in the entire body of Tamil literature.

There were several other scholars who wrote glosses for some other literary works. Unfortunately their names are not known. Scholars like Mayilainātar, Kallātar and Teyvaccilaiyār wrote commentaries on certain grammatical works.

The abovementioned commentators used very few Sanskrit loan words in their commentaries. Their prose style in general reflects the purity of Tamil language. Those who wrote commentaries on the devotional songs of the Ālvārs, departed from this trend and wrote in the *maṇippiravāḷa* style. Nevertheless their commentaries are unequalled in explaining the depth of meaning and rare vision found in devotional songs. Since they distinguished themselves not merely as scholars but as venerated noble souls, who devoted their life to the service of religion, their commentaries are respected as *śāstras*.

During this period a large number of Tamil works were written based on Sanskrit epics and Jain religious works. Therefore the habit of composing single poems in themes like human love and heroism became rare. At the same time stories and even descriptions were borrowed from Sanskrit works. Instead of selecting themes from daily life, the poets of this period selected highly imaginative but often rare and uncommon themes not generally seen in ordinary life. At the same time Sanskrit words were liberally used in religious works and discussions. This can be seen in *Maṇimēkalai* where we come across religious debates. Sanskrit

loan words were increasingly used in Tamil, if the works are based on Jain literatures. The Jain work, *Sripurāṇam* is a classic example of the hybrid style. Poets with religious leanings often preferred to use this hybrid style, in which fifty per cent of words are of Sanskrit origin. However the literary and grammatical commentators who also lived during this period did not write their commentaries in *maṇippiravāḷa* style. Among the commentators, Iḷampūraṇar, Kuṇacākarar and Mayilainātar were Jains whereas Nacciṇārkkiniyar and Aṭiyārkunallār were Śaivites. Parimēlaḷakar was a Vaiṣṇavite. These commentators were distinguished scholars in Tamil literature and grammar and their services to Tamil language is immeasurable. Their commentaries are remarkable specimens of the terse Tamil prose style of the medieval period.

### *Purāṇas and Other Works*

Attempts were made to adapt *purāṇas* from Sanskrit during this period. Among such *purāṇas*, the *Kantapurāṇam* was most important. It has more than 10,000 poems and is based on the Sanskrit work, *Civacaṅkara-caṅkitai*. The *Kantapurāṇam* narrates in detail the birth of Lord Murugaṇ, his growth, his performance of miracles, his war with Cūrapatmaṇ, his marriage with Teyvayāṇai and finally his love episodes with Vaḷḷi. Poet Kacciyappa Civāccāriyār is its author. He followed the Tamil literary conventions in writing this work. He distinguished himself in describing natural scenes. Since *Kantapurāṇam* is known for its poetic excellence, it has been regarded by scholars as the best literary piece among the *Purāṇas*.

Based on the Sanskrit *Bhāgavatam*, Cevvaiccūṭuvār composed a literary work. Another poet Aracakēcari translated Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* into Tamil in 2480 poems. Yet another poet, Pukaḷēnti narrated the story of Naḷaṇ as given in *Mahābhārata* in excellent *veṇpās*. The same story was narrated in *viruttam* metre by Ativīrarāmar, of the Pāṇḍya royal family. The same poet composed *Kūrmapurāṇam* and *Iḷṅkapurāṇam* in Tamil. Kacciyappa Muṇivar translated the *Vināyakapurāṇam* in Tamil. In a mellifluous and moving poetic style, Vīrakavirāyar composed the *Ariccantira purāṇam*. The poems of this work have the capacity to melt the readers' hearts. Another poet, Vaṭamalaiyappar translated *Macapurāṇam* into Tamil.

Maṇṭalapuruṭar, one of the Jain scholars of this period, translated *Ātipurāṇam* a Sanskrit Jain work, into Tamil with the caption *Sripurāṇam*. It is written in *maṇippiravāḷa* style. Another Jain work, the *Kayacintāmaṇi* is also written in a similar style. Vāmaṇa Muṇivar translated another Jain work, the *Mērumantarapurāṇam* into Tamil. It is written in a natural Tamil style without too many Sanskrit loan words. Another Jain scholar wrote an ethical work, *Araṇericcāram*, during this period

### *Talapurāṇams*

With the advent of Umāpaticivam's *Kōyilpurāṇam* in the fourteenth century, many *purāṇams* were written on important temples in the Tamil country. Among them, those that narrate the sixty-four miracles of Lord Śiva, the presiding deity at Madurai, are the most famous. Poets like Vēmpattūrār, Perumpaṇṇappuliyūr Nampi and Paraṇcōti wrote *Purāṇams* describing the miracles of Śiva. Among them the most popular one was written by Paraṇcōti. It is written in 3360 melodious poems in *viruttam* metre. Its popularity has been largely due to clarity and elaborate description of natural scenery.

Some of the poets of the Dharmapuram Mutt composed *purāṇams* in honour of the deities at Tirumalapāṭi and Tiruvorriyūr temples. Both *Tirupparaṅkirippurāṇam* and *Cētopurāṇam* were written by Nirampa Aḷakia Tēcikar. Ativīrarāmapāṇṭiyar wrote *Kācikkāṇṭam* in praise of the North Indian shrine in Benaras. Tirumalainātar's *Citamparapurāṇam* and Kacciyappa Muṇivar's *Taṇikaippurāṇam* are in praise of the deities at Chidambaram and Tiruttani shrines. *Taṇikaippurāṇam* continues to be popular among the people.

*Talapurāṇams* are in existence for the shrines at Tiruvarur, Tiruvengadu, Tiruvannamalai, Tiruchchengodu, Viringipuram, Vedaranyam and Kumbakonam. The famous poet Civappirakācar wrote *Tirukkūvappurāṇam*. Together with his brother he wrote the very interesting *Cikāḷattippurāṇam*. Another poet, Vīrarākava Mudaliar composed *Tirukkalukkunṇappurāṇam*.

During this period *talapurāṇams* have captured the minds of people. The initial cantos like *nāṭṭuppaṭalam* and *nakarappaṭalam* have been included to heighten the literary effect of the *purāṇams*. The poet's vision about nature, landscape, fertility of the soil and the life of the common people such as farmers are included in *talapurāṇams* along with copious descriptions of the country or the



city. The people are happy and proud to read about the greatness of their city as well as their shrine. Sometimes the *talapurāṇams* portray how the wicked and power-drunk people after undergoing miseries in life turn to temples for consolation and ultimately emerge as noble souls. The *talapurāṇams* were used as instruments to narrate stories of this nature drawn out from real life situations in order to make the readers happy and to create in them an interest in literary arts.

In the seventeenth century the poet Ellappa Nāvalar attained fame by writing *talapurāṇams* for the shrines at Tiruvannamalai, Tiruvengadu, Tiruvirinjai, Tirthagiri and Tiruchchengattangudi. He was a poet quite capable of depicting interestingly elaborate natural scenery. His *talapurāṇams* contain many soul-stirring devotional songs. Nāvalar can take credit for composing one of the best *kalampakam*'s known as *Tiruvaruṇaikkalampakam* in praise of the presiding deity at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. It contains many poems of high literary value.

Poets Nāṇappirakācar and Nānakkūttar wrote *talapurāṇams* for the shrines at Tiruvorriyur and Tiruvarur respectively. Likewise many *talapurāṇams* were written for the shrines in the Tamil country. In order to heighten the sanctity and importance of the shrines, the *talapurāṇams* usually narrate that celestials like Intiraṇ and others worshipped at the shrines to absolve themselves from their curses and sins. At the same time, the *talapurāṇams* give an elaborate description of the landscape, including the river and the mountain. In most of the *purāṇams*, very little variation is to be found either in story or in the description.

Now-a-days even scholars seldom read many of the *talapurāṇams*. The few that are read, are read without much interest. The reason for this neglect is largely owing to the absence of novelty in them. In those days people out of vanity urged the poets to churn out *talapurāṇams* and other types of minor works. The people never cared nor worried whether these works possessed any literary feature or distinction or even relevance to life. Since most of the works happen to be stereotyped without any variation in form or in poetic metre or in descriptions readers got disgusted with them. They can be read now as exercise to read and understand poetry but not for literary appreciation. The authors of *talapurāṇams* were also responsible for the present days neglect. The *talapurāṇams* in general lack realism. The poets instead of portray-



ing the life of people in their natural habitat, indulged in imaginative and unnatural descriptions as well as unnecessary jugglery of words. Therefore, the works of this nature might have interested the readers of those days. But they need not necessarily survive the passage of time and interest the readers of modern times. However a few among them do interest the modern reader owing to their literary distinction. Even among them only certain parts, not the whole work might interest the present-day readers. This is largely due to the poets' artistic talent, natural flow of emotion as well as imaginative skill. The unconscious strokes of an eminent artist at times emerge as a wonderful art. Likewise some of the interesting literary passages in *talapurāṇams* are in fact the unconscious portraits of distinguished poets.

#### *Aḷakiya Maṇavālatācar*

An anthology of works, entitled the *Aṣṭappirapantam* abounds in the artistic arrangement of words known as *yamakam* and *cilētai*. Among the eight works in the anthology five of them praise the presiding deity at the temple in Tiruvarankam or Srirangam. Two other works praise the Lord of Tirupati. Some of the works of this anthology written in *kalampakam* and *antāti* genres are composed with extraordinary talent. It is generally believed that all the works in the anthology were written by a Vaiṣṇava devotee known as Pillaipperi umāḷ Iyengar or Aḷakiya Maṇavālatācar. However some scholars believe that all the eight works were not written by him, but by different poets of the same name in different periods of time. Nevertheless there is little difference among them in the usage of words as well as in the treatment of subject matter. The works are not easy to read because of the artistic arrangement of words. Since the *antāti* types of poems abound in *yamakam* and *tiripu* their meaning is not easily understood. In such poems one line is repeated several times and to arrive at their real meaning the words must be split into two or three parts and in different ways. Because of this unnatural arrangement of words, they do not touch or move the heart like the devotional songs of the Ālvārs. Some of the swing songs in the work entitled *Cirankanayakar Ucal*, possess literary value and therefore they captivate the hearts of readers.

#### *Paṭṭiṇattār's Poems*

Paṭṭiṇattār, a Śaiva saint, lived at Kaverippumpattinam in the

tenth or the eleventh century A.D. He composed many devotional songs which are included in the eleventh *Caivattirumuraikal*. His works are the *Kōyil Nāṇmaṇimālai*, *Tirukkaḷumala Mummaṇikkōvai*, *Tiruvīṭaimarutūr Mummaṇikkōvai*, *Tiruvēkampamutaiyār Tiruvantāti* and *Tiruvorriyūr Orupā Orupatu*. The verses in these works have flow and charm to captivate the minds of readers. The poems, which are in *akaval* metre, are known for their simplicity and clarity of thought. His cardinal principle was that one should perform one's worldly duties well, keeping always the thought of God in mind. By keeping the mind in tune with God, Paṭṭiṇattār said with confidence, man neither loses his family life nor the life in the spirit.

Paṭṭiṇatuppiḷḷaiyār Pāṭaltirattu, is yet another work which is attributed to the same author. Only poems contained in this work have become popular among the people. The author of this work is a different Paṭṭiṇattār who lived in Kavirippumpattinam in the fourteenth or the fifteenth century A.D. The poems in this anthology are easily read and understood by people. They are known for their simplicity of style and forcefulness of emotion. To heighten the emotional appeal in these poems some colloquial words have also been liberally used. His pronouncement against family life and his criticisms of worldly life find clear expression in many of the poems of this anthology. Some of the moving poems, composed on the death of this mother, indicate his deep affection for his mother. Many are moved to tears by reciting them even today. Stories about him reveal the stern and austere life he led. His own poems too testify to this.

Pattirakiriyār attained fame and salvation as a disciple of Paṭṭiṇattār. He was the ruler of the Tulu country and became a Sanyasi after his association with Paṭṭiṇattār. His poems were compiled under the title *Pattirakiriyār Pulampal*. The poems are known for their philosophical thought content. In some of the couplets he conveyed his emotions and cravings for salvation in a touching manner.

### *Bhāratam*

The poet Villiputtūrār wrote the Tamil version of the *Mahābhāratam* in 4,300 *viruttam* verses. It has survived the test of time and holds a permanent place in the Tamil literary world. The poems are in smooth flowing style. While describing the war scenes

the style becomes swift and majestic to reflect the mood in the battle-field. Likewise the style varies to reflect different moods like surprise and grief. Villiputtūrār succeeded in giving a Tamil version of the *Mahābhāratam* by including all the important and interesting incidents in the original work. He was capable of composing highly rhythmical and musical poems. To achieve these effects he liberally used Sanskrit loan words along with Tamil.

### *Aruṇakiriyār*

Aruṇakiriyār is yet another Tamil poet who liberally used Sanskrit loan words in poetry. Like Villiputtūrār, he distinguished himself as a poet. He was gifted with the talent for composing highly rhythmic poems. All his 3,000 devotional songs on Murukāṇ are compiled into an anthology known as *Tiruppukal*. They have different rhythms and metres. In the world of music, the work is praised by musicologists as an encyclopaedia of *tālās* and *rāgās*. Even to-day during Tamil music performances poems from *Tiruppukal* are sung. Among the devotional songs composed after *Tēvāram* it is *Tiruppukal* which has attained great fame. In most of the *Tiruppukal* poems, the first part describes the disgusting nature of carnal pleasures derived from prostitutes, while the second portrays the miracles of Murukāṇ as narrated in the *purāṇas* as well as the greatness of His shrines. Aruṇakiriyār's other devotional works are *Kantar Alaṅkāram*, *Kantar Anupūti*, *Kantarantāti*, *Vēl Viruttam*, *Mayil Viruttam* and *Tiruvakuppu*.

### *Naḷavenpā*

In the sixteenth century Pukalēnti narrated in *venpā* metre the story of King Naḷaṇ as told in the *Mahābhārata*. His poetical work is known as *Naḷavenpā*. According to one story, he was regarded as a contemporary of Oṭṭakkūttar, the court poet of the Cōḷa monarchs. One story tells that Pukalēnti came as part of a marriage gift to the Cōḷa court, when the Cōḷa king returned after marrying a Pāṇḍya princess. At the court Oṭṭakkūttar conspired against him and clapped him in prison. There Pukalēnti taught Tamil to the prisoners and made them poets. When the king learnt about the talent of the poets trained by Pukalēnti, he was immediately released from prison. There are many such stories and poems about Pukalēnti. They, however, make interesting reading.

*Naḷavenpā* contains 424 poems written in *venpā* metre. The poems are composed with ease, as if the words are at the poet's absolute command. On the whole, the work is written in a simple, mellifluous style.

As a result of the popularity of *Naḷavenpā*, Pukaḷēnti was praised as a poet who distinguished himself in composing poems in *venpā* metre or to put it in Tamil idiom 'Venpāvil Pukaḷēnti.' In *Naḷavenpā* there are many interesting descriptions of events which reveal Pukaḷēnti's talent as a master craftsman in the art of writing poetry. While describing the arrival of Tamayanti at the *cuyamvara maṇḍapa* or the hall of selection of the bridegroom, the poet compares her to a white swan gliding down a red-lotus pond. Here the hall and the eyes of the kings have been compared as pond and red lotuses respectively. In another place in the work the poet narrates a touching scene. Both Naḷaṇ and Tamayanti leave the kingdom and go to the forest. At midnight while Tamayanti is asleep, Naḷaṇ wakes up to cut the single piece of cloth, which they are wearing at that time. While describing this moving scene, the poet points out that Naḷaṇ's action is similar to severing of his life-ties as well as the very root of his love from her.

Pukaḷēnti used simple and easily comprehensible words to describe artistically the very act of women picking flowers from a garden. In order to pick some flowers, the women merely touched a branch bedecked with flowers, and at the touch, it bowed down to their feet. The poet asks a question, "If women were to touch who will not bow before them?" There are many places in the work, where Pukaḷēnti proves his craftsmanship by describing an incident or a natural scenery in an effortless way. The following poem is an example:

If women touch who will not bow  
'Look my lady', said he  
With a glittering lance in hand  
That the branch bedecked with flowers  
When touched, bowed before their feet.<sup>5</sup>

Besides being a notable poet, Pukaḷēnti was known for his sense of gratitude to his benefactor, who happened to be a feudatory king known as Cantiraṇuvarkki. Pukaḷēnti immortalised him in *Naḷavenpā*, mentioning his name in five places.



There is another story which tells that while Pukaḷēnti was in prison he obtained help from women who were passing along the prison to fetch water. In turn he seems to have composed certain interesting poetical works to make them happy. These works are *Pavaḷakkoṭimālai*, *Alliyaracāṇimālai*, *Pulantiraṇ Tūtu*, *Ēṇiyērram* and *Pañcapāṇṭavar-vaṇavācam*. Most of them are based on the stories in the *Mahābhārata* or the folk tales based on the stories of *Mahābhārata*. Works like the *Pavaḷakkoṭimālai* are written in simple Tamil with a mixture of colloquial words. They can be easily understood without much effort. Even now the village folks enjoy hearing these stories. Like folk-songs these works are known for their fertility of imagination and for their ability to captivate the minds of the people. Scholars consider that the author of *Naḷavenpā* must be different from that of *Pavaḷakkoṭimālai* and other works. To perpetuate the folk tales among the people, they are attributed to Pukaḷēnti, who lived in the thirteenth or the fourteenth century. This is not anything new, for there are many insignificant works the authorship of which is ascribed to well-known poets like Auvaiyār, Kapilar, Akattiyar and Tiruvaḷḷuvar. The poetical works attributed to Pukaḷēnti also belong to this category.

#### *Ativīrarāmar and Other Poets*

Ativīrarāmar, who belonged to the Pāṇḍya line of rulers, held sway over a small territory around Tenkasi. He gained greater fame as a scholar and poet than as a ruler. He wrote several *purāṇas* and other poetical works. Among the *purāṇas*, *Kācikkāṇṭam* is the famous one. It narrates the greatness of Kāci or Banaras in 2,525 verses. Another important work which gained the appreciation of scholars is *Naiṭatam*, written in the *viruttam* metre. It narrates the story of Naḷaṇ, the ruler of the Niṣata country. In fact this story is part of the *Mahābhārata*. The first part of *Naiṭatam* is more elaborate than the second. According to tradition this flaw was pointed out by his wife, who happened to be a scholar in Tamil. Though the work is written in a good style, it is vitiated by the author's overenthusiasm in describing love sequences. In fact it is a work known for *cirukāra rasa*. Ativīrarāmar was also the author of an ethical work, entitled the *Verrivērkai* or *Naruntokai*. Like Auvaiyār's *Ātticcūṭi*, it is also appreciated and read widely. It contains pithy sayings written in a simple and clear style. It looks as though it was a tradition during this period for poets to write



literary as well as ethical works. All the renowned poets of this period like Kumarakuruparar and Civappirakācar wrote ethical works.

Ativīrarāmar's elder brother Varatuṅkarāma Pāṇṭiyar was also a great scholar in Tamil. He was the author of a Śaivite work entitled the *Piramōttara Kāṇṭam*. He also composed a devotional work, known as *Karuvaip-patirruppattantāti*. It was called a minor *Tiruvācakam*, for its ability to melt the hearts of readers. One of the soul-stirring devotional songs of this work is as follows:

Oh Lord!  
The father of Skanta  
The deity at Karuvai  
I gave my thoughts (as offerings) to you  
You bestowed your grace on me  
I said my prayers (as offerings) to you  
You offered your eternal feet (as abode) to me  
I gave flowers (as offerings) to you  
You gave eternity to me.<sup>6</sup>

The *Maccapurāṇam*, which was based on a Sanskrit work, was written by Vaṭamalaippillaiyappaṇ. He was a great patron of poets. One Irattiṇak Kavirāyar received his patronage. He praised Vaṭamalaippillaiyappaṇ's generosity and immortalised his name in a work entitled *Pulavar Ārrippatai*.

### *Kālamēkam*

Those who can compose poems spontaneously, instantaneously and on the spot are known as *ācukavikaḷ* in Tamil. Among the Tamil poets who distinguished themselves in composing instantaneous poems or *ācukavikaḷ*, Kālamēkam was one. He lived in the fifteenth century. The term Kālamēkam literally means in Tamil 'black cloud'. As the cloud-burst staggers the people, the poet Kālamēkam on many important occasions astonished the people by pouring out *ācukavikaḷ* like rain. As a result of his talent for composing poems on the spot his original name was forgotten by the people by and by. By mere listening, most of his poems could be easily understood and appreciated. They also express commendable emotions. Some of his poems express double meanings too. He also composed some poems which were meant to subdue the arrogance of persons disrespectful to poets.

Kālamēkam wrote some works following the Tamil literary tradition. Among them the most famous are *Tiruvāṇaikkā Ulā* and *Cittiramaṭal*. The former describes the procession of a hero surrounded by his dignitaries, while the latter describes a disappointed lover's attempts to immolate himself. The *Cittiramaṭal* belongs to the *maṭal* genre. Despite these works, Kālamēkam is remembered today as a poet for his occasional poems composed spontaneously on certain life-situations.

There are many stories about Kālamēkam, which give the reason for composing some of his *ācukavikal*. When he visited Nagappattinam, his meal was arranged in a choultry where he waited for a long time for the food to be served. The cook, time and again, informed him of the progress of the preparation. Finally, when the food was served on a leaf, he composed a humorous poem ridiculing the inordinate delay.

The poem runs thus:

In the evening rice would have  
arrived at the Kāttan Choultry  
in Nagappattinam. It would have  
fallen asleep before the cook  
had pounded and cooked the rice.  
The day would have dawned before  
he had scooped up the rice and  
served it on the leaf.<sup>7</sup>

There is another witty poem in which he chides a butter-milk vendor for selling him diluted butter-milk. 'Oh water, if you are in the sky, you are known as cloud. When you descend on the earth you are known as water. Once you reach the hands of this lady you are known as butter-milk. How many names you bear?' Even gods are held as objects of humour in some of his poems.

### *Irattaiippulavar*

There is a unique episode in Tamil literature where two poets teamed up because of birth deformity and distinguished themselves by their literary compositions. They were also cousins. One was blind and the other was lame. Both of them led a life of mutual help. The lame one sat on the shoulders of the blind one and directed the way. Their poetic talents brightened their life and

strengthened their relationship. They were known as Iḷaṇcūriyar and Mutucūriyar. While composing quatrains the first two lines were composed by one; and the next two by the other with similar emotion and imagination. Some of the poems, which belittle the rich for not respecting poetic talent, show their self-respect. Some other poems, which praise the noble qualities of the rich, bring out their gratitude. Many of their *tanippataikal* or occasional poems reveal their profundity of thought and the technique in composing poems. Some of the poems are known for their humorous expression of ideas.

Irattāippulavar distinguished themselves in writing *kalam-pakam* type of works. Two of their important *kalampakams* are the *Tiruvāmāttūrk-kalampakam* and the *Tillaik-kalampakam*. In the *ulā* genre, their composition *Ēkāmpānātarula* is famous.

#### *Antakakkavi (Blind Poet)*

Though Antakakkavi Vīrarākava Mudaliar was born blind, he distinguished himself by his poetic gift and scholarship. He had sound training in music, and gained fame as a poet. His poems are known for their diction and depth of meaning. He travelled to Sri Lanka, made the ruler Pararaja Singha happy by his compositions and won many prizes from him.

Antakakkavi made a mark in writing *pillāittamiḷ*, *kalam-pakam*, *kōvai* and *ulā* types of works. He wrote a *talapurāṇam* for Tirukkalukkuṇṇam. He composed two *ulās*, one on a king and the other on Śiva, the presiding deity at Tiruvarur temple. The latter work is known as the *Tiruvārūr Ulā*. It is regarded by scholars as the most artistic and refined poetical work among the available *ulās*. Besides these he wrote many poems in the form of letters and they are known as the *Cīṭṭukkavikal* (verse in the form of letter). They are highly imaginative and make delightful reading.

#### *Atimaturakavi and Others*

A famous contemporary of poet Kālamēkam was Atimaturakavi. His poems are known for their fertility of imagination.

Most of the poets of this period possessed imagination and skill in the use of words. However, they were unable to make a living by writing. Most of them were living in chill penury. Neither

were they able to live happily by reciting their works to the common people nor were they able to get financial assistance by singing the praise of the rich. Besides there was no philanthropist who could admire and support poets. The following poem is a classic example which portrays the suffering of a poet.

I praised an illiterate as a scholar,  
a wood-cutter as a ruler, and a  
cruel person as a noble one:  
I praised him as a tiger on the battle-field,  
though he had not seen one.  
I praised his deformed shoulders  
as the shoulders of a wrestler  
'Nothing to offer' was what he said  
for all my fulsome praises.  
For the height of my folly  
Full of regret I am.<sup>8</sup>

"Throughout my life I have showered praises on many miserly persons. However the reply I had from them was 'nothing to offer,' " said a poet as he grieved about his penury.

Poet Tolkāppiyattēvar wrote a *kalampakam* praising the deity at Tiruppatirippuliyur shrine. It was praised as a famous work by Irattāippulavar.

Another poet of this period, Tirukkurukaipperumā! Kavirāyar was a great devotee of Nammālvār. Kavirāyar was the author of two grammatical works: *Māṇakapporu!* and *Māṇalaṅkāram*. The former gives the rules for the *akam* type of poetry while the latter for figures of speech in poetry. Both the works are named after his revered saint Māṇaṇ or otherwise known as Nammālvār. Besides these two grammatical works, he wrote a few literary works as well.

### *Saiva Mutts*

The *Saiva mutts*, which were established to render service to Śaivism, took an interest in the advancement of Tamil literature. They preserved old literary and grammatical works as well as supported the efforts to write new ones. Some of the heads of these institutions were not only learned scholars but evinced keen interest



in research. As a result opportunity was created for many poets to obtain the patronage of these religious institutions. This was the main reason for some of the poets in the nineteenth century to be members of the *mutts*. They remained there and taught Tamil literature to interested students. They also wrote some original works. Even some of the leaders of these institutions composed some literary and grammatical work. Religious institutions like the Tiruvavatuturai Mutt and the Dharmapuram Mutt were established in the fourteenth century. A few of the works written by the poets of these institutions, attained literary fame. Some among them wrote commentaries on the ancient literary and grammatical works. Vira Śaiva *mutts* located at Tiruvannamalai and Turaimaṅgalam rendered no small service to the growth of Tamil literature.

### *Kumarakuruparar*

Among the poets who belonged to the Dharmapuram *mutt*, Kumarakuruparar achieved great fame in the literary world. He belonged to the eighteenth century. He renounced the world at a young age and became a hermit. He won distinction as a great poet even while he was young. At the instance of Tirumalai Nāyak, the Nāyak ruler of Madurai, he composed the famous *Mīṇāṭciyam-mai Piḷḷaiattamiḷ* on the Goddess Mīṇāṭci of Madurai Temple. This work carved a niche for itself among the *piḷḷaiattamiḷ* genre of works. It is noted for its devotional fervour, literary grandeur and captivating rhythm. He also composed *Maturaik Kalampakam* in praise of the city of Madurai. On Tiruvarur, he wrote the notable literary work, *Naṇmaṇimālai*. Likewise on Chidambaram, he composed *Mummaṇikkōvai*, *Ceyyutkōvai* and *Civakāmiyammai Iraṭṭaimanimālai*. He composed *Paṇṭāra Mummaṇikkōvai* in honour of his revered teacher at Dharmapuram. Among the Tamil poets he was the first to travel to North India and to live and compose literary works there. He established a Śaiva religious institution or *mutt* at Banaras, which exists even today. To establish the *mutt*, he sought the assistance of the then Muslim ruler in Delhi. To be able to converse with him, Kumarakuruparar wanted to learn the Hindustani language and for this purpose he sought the grace of Saraswati, the goddess of learning. His devotional work on Saraswati is known as the *Cakalakalāvallimālai*. During his stay in Banaras, he delivered lectures on the greatness of Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇa*, on Śaivism and on other religious works, in Hin-



dustani. He wrote a *kalampakam*, known as the *Kācikkalam-pakam*, in praise of the city of Banaras, where he later attained *moksha* or salvation.

*Muttukkumārācāmi Piḷḷaittamiḷ* is another important work written by Kumarakurupparar. The *Mīṇāṭciyammai Kuram* speaks about the eternal mercy of God, in the form of a prophecy told by a women soothsayer, known as *kuratti*. All his works are known for their fertile imagination, pleasing rhythm and depth of thought. It can be seen from his ethical work, *Nītinerviḷakkam*, that he was an adept in treating ethical principles with clarity. This didactic work contains 102 *venpas*, full of beautiful similes.

Description of natural scenic splendours becomes hyperbolical with the increase of epics and *puranas*. In the *Caṅkam* classics there is to a large extent realism in such description. However some of the hyperbolic statements that are found in the *Caṅkam* classics are in fact emotionally charged statements rather than a concocted or an idealised description. This trend in the classical works changed during the period of the *purāṇas*. Besides the usual exaggerated statements intended purely for emphasis, too many hyperbolical descriptions are found in the *purāṇas*. Poets of this period excelled one another in this newly developed art. Their imagination did not confine itself to the objects in the world but also embraced the things in heaven. This type of description in fact became a convention among the poets of this period. Although Kumarakurupparar is a great and unique poet known for his creative ability, he was unable to escape the trend and conventions of the period, and indulged in hyperbolical descriptions too.

Hyperbolical descriptions abound in Kumarakurupparar's works and this can be seen from the following illustrations. The trees of the world reach the heaven and grow together with the *karpakam* trees. The gems gathered by girls are in heaps resembling mountains. Since the heaps are so high they reach the heaven and become a barrier to the rivers there. The stagnated water resembles a reservoir. The sun and the moon are personified as canoes to cross the reservoir. Likewise the groves at Madurai reach the sky. The bees scatter the pollen dust so much that it silts the river Ganges in heaven. Since the farmers are stark drunk they are unable to distinguish the buffaloes from the clouds. So they yoke both the buffaloes and the clouds and start ploughing their fields. The sugar-canes grown in the fields of Madurai reach the heaven,

to be consumed by Indra's elephant. Likewise the paddy-fields too reach the heaven, to be eaten up by the heavenly cow *Kāmadēnū*. An eel from the fields of Madurai leaps and bombards the moon, so that its nectar can flow to the earth. Then it returns safely to the heaven. Another eel leaps and hits *Kāmadēnū*'s udder. *Kāmadēnū* thinks that it is his calf and begins to shower milk. Many of these hyperbolical descriptions that one finds in his writings, though interesting, are mere curiosities. Though a great poet, he too indulges in word-jugglery and succumbs to the tradition of his day. He has written some verses full of word-jugglery like *cilētai* and *maṭakku*.

Though a prisoner of tradition in some respects, we can see in Kumarakuruparar's works all the important features of great poetry. Many poems of his reveal how he enjoyed the beauty of the flora and the fauna around him. Some of the rhythmic and artistically composed poems reveal his complete mastery of words.

Kumarakuruparar possessed a natural talent for composing interesting poems even on ethical themes. For example, the following poem on the impermanence of life lacks none of the virtues of a literary piece:

Youth is like a bubble on water  
Wealth is like waves that rise in water  
Human body is like the writing on water  
Oh fellow human beings!  
Even after knowing the impermanence  
Why don't you pray to Śiva's hall of dance? 9

Kumarakuruparar expressed many interesting views on education. Besides, he had great regard for poets and their artistic compositions. This comes out clearly from the following: "The goddess of learning lives on the face of Brahma, the god of creation. However Brahma cannot be equal to poets. For Brahma's creations, the human bodies perish whereas the creations of poets live for ever." Kumarakuruparar's pride as a poet is seen in the work *Cakalakalāvallimālai*, where he implores the grace of the goddess of learning, to master a new language. He implores her to grant him the power, so that "after hearing my poems, even the greatest among the monarchs should bow before me." His reverence for the goddess of learning becomes clear from the following contents

of a poem. "The God of preservation has been sleeping. The God of annihilation has gone out of senses. But the God of creation Brahma has been happy because of the presence of Kalaimakal, the goddess of learning." Thus Kumarakuruparar distinguishes himself as an eminent poet of the seventeenth century because on whatever themes he composes poems, his fertile imagination and skill in use of words come to the fore in all of them.

### *Civappirakācar*

Both Kumarakuruparar and Civappirakācar were eminent poets of the seventeenth century. Like Kumarakuruparar, Civappirakācar was also a sanyasin. He belonged to the Viraśaiva sect of Hinduism, and lived at the Turaimangalam Mutt. He attained fame in his youth by composing a very difficult work entitled the *Nirōṭṭakayamaka Antāti* (This type of work has three special features. In *nirōṭṭakam* poems vowel consonants like ma, pa and va will not be used. In the absence of these letters, the poem can be recited without the convergence of lips. The other poetic features like *yamakam* and *antāti* are also in this poem. Hence the work is called the *Nirōṭṭakayamaka Antāti*). While he was staying at the mutt in Veṅkai city, he wrote a *kōvai* and a *kalampakam* work in praise of the city. In honour of his revered teacher, he composed *kalampakam*, *tālāṭṭu*, *pillaittamil*, *tiruppalliyelucci* and *tūtu* type of literary works. He also wrote an ethical work entitled, *Nanneri*. Civappirakācar along with his two brothers wrote a *purāṇam* on the Tirukkālatti shrine. The first and third parts of the work were written by his brothers Karuṇaippirakācar and Vēlaiyacuvāmikal respectively. The middle part of the work was written by Civappirakācar himself. He wrote twenty-three works in all. Among them *Nālvarṇaṇmaṇimālai* and *Pirapulinkalilai* are the most famous poetical compositions. The former work contains forty poems; ten poems each for the four Śaiva saints, namely, Tiruṇāṇacampan-tar, Tirunāvukkaracar, Cuntarar and Māṇikkavācakar. This interesting work reveals Civappirakācar's reverence, love and admiration for the Saints. Everyone of the forty poems is highly imaginative and profound in thought. His major work, *Prapulinkalilai*, is an epic which glorifies the greatness of Viraśaivism. Śiva's incarnation, Allamappirapu, is the hero of the epic. It is a work of rare imagination and known for its beauty of similes. In fact it is the quintessence of all that is noble and beautiful



in literature and interests every reader. Civappirakācar's mind was fully immersed in Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*. He describes the greatness of this work in one of the poems in the *Nāl-varnāṇmaṇimālai* thus:

We have not seen anyone moved to tears of joy when the Vedas are recited. But if the *Tiruvācakam* is once recited even a stubborn person will be moved; tears will flow from his eyes like a spring from a sandy well; his hair will stand on end and he himself will become its devotee. Other than this I have not seen any other change.<sup>10</sup>

### *Civaṇāṇa Muṇivar*

Īcāṇa Tēcikar, otherwise known as Cāmināta Tēcikar belonged to the *Tiruvāvaṭuturai mutt*. Besides *Ilakkaṇakkottu*, a grammar, he wrote *kalampakam* and other types of literary works. His disciple Caṅkaranamaccivāyar was a great scholar both in Sanskrit and Tamil. He wrote an elaborate commentary on the first Sutra of *Tolkāppiyam*. His *Kāñchipurāṇam*, the best among the *talapurāṇams*, is well known for its unique literary merit. He composed an ethical work, *Cōmēcar Mutumolivenpā*, in *venpā* metre. Everyone of the poems in this work contains some lines of *Tirukkural* as well as some stories or historical incidents relevant to the contents of the *Kural* cited. He also wrote an erudite, elaborate as well as a concise commentary (*māpāṭiyam* or *Mahā Baṣhyam*) on *Civaṇāṇpōtam*, the basic text for the Śaiva Siddhanta philosophy. His prose works reveal his scholarship in Sanskrit, logic and grammar. His protest notes which came in the form of books, were dreaded even by scholars of his time. His protest note, entitled *Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkac Cūrāvaḷi*, is against the grammatical work *Ilakkaṇa Viḷakkam*. Another one, which he wrote under the pseudonym *Vairakkuppāyam*, is against a section of commentary on a Sutra in *Civaṇāṇa-citiyār*. Besides he also translated some Sanskrit works into Tamil. Some of his minor literary works which attained fame are *Amutāmpikai Piḷḷaittamiḷ* and *Cekaḷunīr Vināyakar Piḷḷaittamiḷ*. He wrote some *talapurāṇams* for some of the shrines in the Tamil country.

Civañāṇa Cuvāmikaḷ, a disciple of Kacciyappa Muṇivar, wrote an interesting *talapurāṇam* praising the shrine at Tiruttani and the greatness of the presiding deity Lord Murugaṇ. He was provoked to write this *purāṇam* as interestingly as possible in order to prevent the people of his days from reading the Jain epic, *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. Therefore the work embodies all the best literary features in *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. His disciple Kantappaiyar wrote *Pērūrpurāṇam*, *Vināyakapurāṇam*, *Pūvaḷūrappurāṇam* *Kacci Ānataruttirēcar Vaṇṭuviṭutūtu* and *Tiruttanikai Ārrippatai*.

One other disciple of Civañāṇa Cuvāmikaḷ was Toṭṭikalai Cuppiramaṇiya Muṇivar. He wrote *Tiruttanit-tiruviruttam*, *Turaicaikkōvai*, *Kalaicaikkōvai*, *Citamparēcar Vaṇṇam* and other works. He also composed some works like the *Tirucciṇṇampala Tēcikar Cintu* and the *Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar Ānantakkaḷippu* in honour of some of the leaders of the Śaiva mutts. The latter two works are on the model of folk songs.

### *Cāntaliṇika Cuvāmikaḷ*

In the eighteenth century, poet Cāntaliṇika Cuvāmikaḷ established a *mutt* at Tirupporur, a few miles south of Madras City. He was a sanyasin of the Vīra Śaiva denomination of Hinduism. He wrote many interesting religious works such as *Vairākkiya Catakam*, *Vairākkiya Tīpam*, *Avirōta Untiyār*, *Kolaimaruttal* and *Neñ-cuviṭutūtu*. His successor, Citampara Cuvāmikaḷ composed some important literary works. Among them the *Tiruppōrūr Can-nitimurai* contains soul-stirring devotional poems.

### *Citampara Cuvāmikaḷ*

Among the post-medieval poets who led a sanyasin's life and at the same time composed devotional works, Citampara Cuvāmikaḷ is worthy of praise. Besides an independent work *Neñ-cuviṭutūtu*, he composed a lengthy poem on goddess Mīṇāṭci. On Lord Murugaṇ, the presiding deity at Tirupporur, Citampara Cuvāmikaḷ composed *Piḷḷaittamil*, *Tālaṭṭu*, *Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci*, *Kuyilpāṭṭu*, *Kiḷippāṭṭu*, *Tūtut* and *Ūcal*. Three among the foregoing works, *Kuyilpattu*, *Aṭaikkalappattu* and *Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* are similar to *Tiruvācakam* both in lucidity of style and in the capacity to melt the hearts of readers.



### Tattuvarāyar

Tattuvarāyar was the only poet who used both the conventional poetic forms as well as the folk forms to compose many philosophical poems. He wrote *ulā*, *tūtu*, *kalampakam*, *paraṇi* and *antāti* types of poems. Two of his *paraṇi* works are *Aṇṇavataip-paraṇi* and *Mōkavataipparaṇi*. In these two works battle-fields have no place. They narrate only the internal conflict of the enlightened soul on the one hand and ignorance as well as lust on the other. Some of the poems are similar to *Tiruvācakam* both in style and form. However since his poems give more premium to philosophy than devotion, they lack the literary quality of *Tiruvācakam*. Tattuvarāyar followed *Tiruvācakam* closely to compose poems like *Kuyil Pattu*, *Aṇṇaippattu*, *Tiruccālal*, *Accōppatikam*, *Tiruvammānai*, *Tiruvempāvai*, *Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci* and *Ūcal*. Like *Tēvāram* he composed devotional songs on the *akam* theme. He selected appealing folk forms to express philosophical ideas effectively. Poems like *kuravai*, *pakaṭi* (games played by girls), *pantaṭital* (a ball game), *kuṟatti*'s self introduction and *kuṟicollutal* (sooth saying) are based on folk songs. In addition, he composed, *antik-kāppu*, a type of ritual poem, which relates to a ritual conducted for the benefit of young boys and girls in the evening by women, to ward off evils. He composed some poems similar to songs played on musical instruments like *kuṇalai*, *paraṭil*, *impil* and *kālam*. Some other verses were composed on the model of snake-charmer songs and the songs sung during the *kuṟavai* dance. He also composed verses similar to Āṇṭāl's poem, "Oh maid, I dreamt a dream." His apostrophe's to hen, parrot and lizard contain philosophical themes. It is really a wonder that Tattuvarāyar was able to convey such a sublime truth, through an apostrophe addressed to a lizard.

If the wavering mind would cooperate with us  
 If the mind could transform itself to attain realisation  
 If all the places of search would lead to eternity  
 Then Oh Lizard!  
 Chirp good words from the right direction.<sup>11</sup>

(According to some scholars the first three lines of the foregoing poem exemplify the Nāṇa Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga in that order.)

*Tāṇṭavarāyar*

Tāṇṭavarāyar's work, *Kaivalya Navanītam* explains the Advaita philosophy in 310 *viruttam* verses. It is such an interesting work that readers would marvel, whether a philosophical work could be written in a style so simple and rhythmic. The title of the work means "the essence (or butter) which explains the uniqueness of the soul (or *anma*).” In other words this interesting religious work is nothing but a derivation of facts (butter) derived from the *Upanishads* as well as Sankara's commentary (churned out of the ocean of *Upanishads* and Sankarar's Commentary).

*Tāyumāṇavar (1705–1742)*

Tāyumāṇavar was a great philosopher with a sound scholarship both in Tamil and Sanskrit. He was a minister to Vijayarāṅka Cokkanātar, a ruler of Tiruchchirappalli. He renounced this prestigious position, When he became a realised soul. After this, he spent most of his time in deep meditation and in writing philosophical poems. They reveal that they were written in a state of spiritual exaltation. He was to some extent able to reconcile the apparent conflicting philosophies of Advaita and Śaiva Siddhānta, and synthesize them. The inner meaning of the *Upanishads* and other philosophical works found clear expression in his poems. He composed many devotional songs too. He expressed philosophical truths through the medium of traditional *akam* poems. The poems in *Ākārapuvaṇam*, *Āṇantakkaḷippu* and *Paiṅkilikkanni* reveal this.

Oh happy parrot!  
To my Lord  
Who captivated my heart  
Tell my grief  
And pleasant news bring back.

Oh parrot!  
That enchanting feet  
Which cannot be written  
On any letter  
Will be written  
On mind's page  
And be delivered to Him?

See that One  
Which has to be seen  
And be freed of doubts  
The One freed from things  
Oh Parrot  
Will I ever reach it?<sup>12</sup>

Like the foregoing poems, the *Painkilikkanni* contains fifty-eight poems. (Kannis are two-line poems.) The poems in *Anantakkalippu* are addressed to the maid in *akam* poems. They are modelled on folk-songs sung by mendicants while begging for alms in streets. One of these songs is as follows:

Caṅkara Caṅkara Campu-Siva  
Caṅkara Caṅkara Caṅkara Campu.<sup>13</sup>

In the same rhythm, Tāyumāṇavar also composed some poems with noble ideas. The following poem expresses a highly philosophical truth:

Existing or non-existing  
And experienced feeling  
All that your mind realised  
Are nothing but Me  
So said my Lord  
And took me as His own.  
Imagine His cleverness  
Oh maid!<sup>14</sup>

In such couplets Tāyumāṇavar was able to convey explicitly very subtle truths. One other composition, the *Parāparakkaṇaṇi* also reveals the same features. It contains 389 couplets.

I know nothing else, my Lord  
Except to think, all should be happy.<sup>15</sup>  
Even if one learns to control anger  
Even if one achieves all miraculous powers  
What use will they be  
If one hasn't learnt to control one's mind.<sup>16</sup>

Many of his couplets point out the noblest religious truths. In

his personal life Tāyumāṇavar showed love without distinction to all people. He shunned religious controversies and preached eclecticism. That light of eclecticism is reflected in his poems. They also have the sweet aroma of the finest literary pieces.

### NOTES

1. Pāmpāṭṭiccittar, *Cittar Pāṭalkaḷ* (Madras, 1976), pm 60, p. 229.
2. Kutampaiccittar, *Cittar Pāṭalkaḷ* (Madras, 1976), pm 28, p. 245.
3. Puliyurk Kecikan (ed.), *Kalanekap Pulavar Tanippataalkal*, 4th edn. (Madras, 1977), p. 172.
4. Centurai Muttu (ed.), *Taṇcaivāṇaṇ Kōvai* (Pudukkottai, 1969), pm 298, p. 234.
5. M.V. Venugopal Pillai (ed.), *Naḷavenpā* (Madras, 1958), pm 174, p. 166.
6. N.S. Taṇṭapāṇi Pillai (ed.), *Tirukkaruvaip-patirruppa* (Madras, ?), pm 63, p. 71.
7. Puliyūrkkēcikan, (ed.), *Kaḷamēkap Pulavar Tanippāṭalaḷ* (Madras, 1973) pm 190, p. 167.
8. S.A. Rāmacāmip Pulavar (ed.), *Tanippāṭal Tilraṭṭu*, Pt. I (Madras, 1963), pm 959, p. 374.
9. T.S. Pālacuntaram Pillai (ed.), *Kumarakuruparar's Nītinēri Viḷakkam* (Madras, 1939), p. 1.
10. Saiva Siddhanta Publishing House (ed.), *Nālvar Nāṇmaṇimālai*, revised ed. (Madras, 1967), pm 4, pp. 14–15.
11. T. Murukēca Mudaliar (ed.), *Tattuvarāya Cuvāmikal Pāṭutaurai* (Madras, ), p. 134.
12. Muttukkumāracuvāmi (ed.), *Tāyumāṇava Cuvāmikal Pāṭal*, second ed. (Tiruppanantal, 1963), pms 2, 11, & 15, pp. 191–92.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

## Catakams and Other Works

1700–1900 A.D.

### *Catakam*

There are many works in Tamil literature which contain one hundred poems, ten poems in each of the ten chapters. The *Caṅkam* classics, *Pattirruppattu* was the first work of this genre. In the medieval times, the *Piḷḷaittamil* works were also written in this manner. There is yet another type, which contains one hundred poems but without any sub-division of the chapters. Such works are called by the Sanskrit term *catakam*. A section of poems in Mānikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam* is known as *Tiruccatakam*. Subsequently many *catakams* were written in praise of gods, philanthropists and chieftains. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was keen interest in composing *catakams*. Their study was made compulsory in schools and read by others with interest, for they explained the rules of conduct with interesting similes. To make it easy for reading, they were rendered in a smooth flowing style. Alliterations and assonances helped in learning the verses by rote. The *catakams* in fact reflect the transformation and growth of Tamil poetic style from one of turgidity to simplicity. They also throw some light like the inscriptions on historical events of the country. The authors of *catakams* recorded faithfully the events of a particular geographical area of their days. As a result of their efforts, works like the *Toṇṭaimaṇṭala Catakam*, *Pāṇṭimaṇṭala Catakam*, *Cōḷamaṇṭala Catakam*, *Koñ-*



*Kumaṇṭala Catakam*, *Īlamaṇṭala Catakam* and *Nantimaṇṭala Catakams* were written. (Toṇṭaimaṇṭalam refers to the area around Kanchipuram and Īlam to Sri Lanka.)

The *Tiruttoṇṭar Catakam* portrays the life of the Saiva saints. Other *catakams* like the *Taṇṭalaiyār Catakam* and the *Kōvinta Catakams*, were compilations of the proverbs that were in vogue in the country in the form of devotionals songs. Besides proverbs and their explanatory stories historical events were faithfully recorded in the *Ceyañkoṭār Catakam*. Other *catakams* point out only ethical values that were useful to the mundane life. The *Kailācanātar Catakam*, for example, besides dwelling on ethics, makes mention of astrology and offers useful hints to maintain one's health.

In *catakams* certain conventions were followed while writing the verses. Every verse in a *catakam* should repeat a particular word or a phrase or a string of words, either in the last line or in the previous line. To cite some examples, everyone of the verses in the *Pāṇṭimaṇṭala Catakam* and the *Aṛappaḷicura Catakam* ends in "Pāṇṭimaṇṭalamē" and "Aṛappaḷicura Tēvaṇē" respectively. Whereas in the *Kumarēca Catakam* a line itself is repeated—"mayilēṛi viḷaiyāṭu kukaṇē pulvayalnīṭu malaimēvu kumarē-caṇē"—in every one of the verses.

Aruṇācalak Kavirāyar's disciple Ampalāvāṇak Kavirāyar is the author of *Aṛappaḷicura Catakam*. They lived in the eighteenth century. Some of the poems in the *Aṛappaḷicura Catakam* are interesting to read because they list parallel ideas like a garland of flowers. The following poems catalogues the things that are useless in life.

A country without a temple  
A face without a nose  
Talent without character  
Flower without fragrance  
Army without elephant corps  
Crops without a guard  
Houses without children  
The sky without the moon  
The royal-court without a poet  
Music without rhythm  
A country without a ruler  
The miser's wealth

Austerity without regularity  
And meat without salt  
.....  
Are of no use.<sup>1</sup>

There is yet another poem which lists the qualities that are absent in certain types of persons. A part of the poem is given below.

No ethics for a person filled with lust  
No shame for a prostitute  
No fame for a renegade  
No fear of darkness for a thief  
No vows for an immoral spinster.<sup>2</sup>

By listing, the author highlighted many ethical values and experiences of life.

In the absence of encyclopaedias, poets used *catakams* as a glossary to list the incarnations of Viṣṇu, the *purāṇas*, the thirty-two virtues and other things useful to scholars.

In the *Kumarēca Catakam* certain persons are categorised as ghosts and their faults are set out. According to the author of this work, persons who put on a long face when asked to repay a loan, who behave arrogantly after gaining a position, who disrespect good and elderly persons, who take bribe, who go after prostitutes while having a wife in the house, are all ghosts. Likewise many ethical values are pointed out in different ways in *catakams*.

The *Taṇṭalaiyār Catakam* is a book of proverbs. It brings out the essence of one hundred proverbs in hundred verses. It was a popular work among the people of the last generation.

Many *catakams* were written in honour of the presiding deities at such famous shrines as Tiruvannamalai and Tirupati. The *Akat-tīcar Catakam*, the *Arapic Catakam* and others were composed by certain Muslim poets. In the nineteenth century, the poet Catācivappiḷḷai of Yāḷppāṇam composed the *Īyēcunātar Tirucaatakam* in praise of Lord Jesus. Many poets wrote *catakams* for many reasons and in praise of deities in various shrines of the Tamil country.

*Aḷakarkilḷaiviṭutūtu*

In the fifteenth century the poet Palapaṭṭaṭaia Cokkanātap

Pulavar wrote the *Aḷakarkilḷaiviṭutūtu*, which has been regarded as one among important *tūtu* works. In this work the heroine brings out the merits of the parrot for sending it as a messenger to God. Likewise many other related descriptions are interestingly made. It is written in a very captivating and beautiful style.

### *Paṭikkācup Pulavar*

Paṭikkācup Pulavar, the author of *Tonṇṭaimaṇṭala Catakam*, was a famous poet known for his compositions of *cantappāṭalkal* or rhythmic poems. He lived during the period of the well-known Muslim philanthropist, Cītaṅkāṭi and was patronised by him. On the death of Cītaṅkāṭi, the poet immortalised him, praising his generosity in feeding the people during a famine.

The poem runs as follows:

Those were the days of famine  
When gold and paddy were weighed  
With a pair of scales.  
It was in those days  
Oh Cītaṅkāṭi!  
Born with the grace of God,  
Whoever came knocking at your door  
Without fear of scarcity  
You fed them all.<sup>3</sup>

Paṭikkācup Pulavar's another important work was *Vēlūrkalampakam*. The fame he had achieved in his lifetime is excellently brought out in the following poem composed by the poet, Cokkanātar.

Paṭikkācan of the famous Tenkaḷantai  
Whose poems on palm leaves  
Even if covered with silk  
Their fragrance will reach the worlds three!  
If touched with eagerness,  
The hand will smell  
If repeated,  
The mouth will smell.<sup>3</sup>  
If planted,  
The Tamil crops will grow  
Such is the charm of his poems.<sup>4</sup>

### Nallāppiḷḷai

It was popular among the Tamils in the eighteenth century to learn the *Mahābhārata* and to give discourses on it. The poet Villiputtūrār's *Bhāratam* was largely used for this purpose. Since it was a very concise work, many scholars wanted to elaborate it. Two poets, Nallāppiḷḷai and Murukappa Upattiyāyar came forward to do this onerous task. In addition to Villiputtūrār's 4,300 verses, the two poets composed another 10,400 verses to bring out an elaborate Tamil version of the *Mahābhārata*. Since a large number of the new verses were written by Nallāppiḷḷai, the elaborate version of the *Mahābhārata* came to be known as the *Nallāppiḷḷai Bhāratam*. In Tamil Nadu even now discourses on the *Bhāratam* are given for twenty to thirty days and on the concluding day, a grand celebration is held. In such discourses Nallāppiḷḷai's *Bhāratam* is used to explain various minor stories of the *Mahābhārata*. Since the verses in Nallāppiḷḷai's *Bhāratam* are similar to Villiputtūrār's in rhythm and style, Nallāppiḷḷai's *Bhāratam* too gained literary status.

### Other Works

The *Tiruccentūr Murukan Piḷḷaittamil* is the most famous among the Piḷḷaittamil works written during this period. It was written by Pakalikkūttar. It is a great devotional work remarkable for its literary excellence.

Another poet, Kaṭavuḷmāmunivar wrote the *Tiruvātavūrp Purāṇam*. Although it is like any other *talapurāṇam*, it gained fame because it narrates the life story of Saint Māṇikkavācakar.

In the nineteenth century, Maturakavirāyar wrote a play in verse form entitled *Tirukkaccūr Nanti*. Some of his occasional poems are known for their poetic excellence.

Oppilāmaṇippulavar was the court poet of Saraboji, the Mahārāshtrian ruler of Tanjavur. He wrote the work, *Civarakaciyum* in 4,000 verses.

Apirāmapaṭṭar was the priest in King Saraboji's temple. His work, the *Apirāmi Antāti*, has been a prayer book for the worshipper's of Sakti. It is a soul-stirring devotional work, written in a direct, clear and beautiful style.

Another poet, who happened to be the court poet of King Saraboji, was Civakkoḷuntu Tēcikar. He wrote two *talapurāṇams*,

three *ulās*, one *kōvai* and a play entitled the *Kuṛavañci* conforming to conventional literary form and style.

The poet Arapatta Nāvalar set down the rules of the *Bharatanāṭya* in verses. Besides, he also wrote a highly imaginative work, the *Aḷakar Kalampakam*, in conformity with the rules of other *kalampakam* works.

### NOTES

1. Pulavar aracu (ed.), *Aṛappalīcura Catakam* (Madras, 1954), pm 10, p. 18.
2. *Ibid.*, pm 18, p.30.
3. S.A. Rāmacāmip Pulavar (ed.), *Taṇippāṭal Tirattu*, Pt. I (Madras, 1963), pm 674, p.250.  
*Ibid.*, pm 784, p. 296.



## Nineteenth Century

### *Printing Machine and the Tamil Prose*

With the advent of printing machine in the Tamil country in the sixteenth century, printing in Tamil started in 1577 A.D. Tamil was first among the Indian languages in which the Christian missionaries printed religious tracts. Up to the eighteenth century printing machines were solely in the hands of these missionaries and the East India Company. It was in the nineteenth century that Indians won the privilege to use the printing machine. As a result works which were in palm leaves came to be printed. At the same time attempts were made to print prose works in Tamil. They were mostly propaganda pamphlets written by the Christians and the Muslims with a view to spreading their religion. The Hindus later followed their example to safeguard the interests of their faith. Printing machines used at the outset primarily to print propagandist literature were increasingly used later to print old and new poetical works, new prose works, monthlies and weeklies. While the printing machines were becoming popular, many educational institutions were established throughout the country in pursuance of the educational policy introduced by the English. Consequently printed textbooks for students were in great demand. These textbooks hastened the phenomenal growth of Tamil prose works. They in turn helped the growth of Tamil prose style. Unlike the works written on palm leaves, the printed works were comparatively inexpensive. This enabled many to buy and

read books. There was a phenomenal rise in the number of persons who read books. All these development provided the right climate for many to try their hand at writing essays and monographs in prose. Compared to the earlier centuries, the number of works that were produced during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries was far too many. Although very few works of quality were written, the printed works undoubtedly spread literacy among the people, and this in turn gave a fresh fillip to literary growth.

The two noted English officials, Ellis and Mackenzie were responsible for establishing the College of Fort St. George in 1812. The former translated the *Tirukkural*, while the latter collected important works written on palm leaves. Notable among the Tamil teachers who served the College were Muttucāmp Pillai, Tāṇṭavarāya Mudaliar and Koṭṭaiyūr Civakkoḷuntu Tēcikar. Muttucāmp Pillai was responsible for printing *Reverend Beschi's Tamil Dictionary* and other works. In 1825, Tāṇṭavarāya Mudaliar translated the fables of *Pañcatantra* from Marathi into Tamil. The following year he brought out a collection of short stories that were current in Tamil Nadu under the title *Katāmañcari*. Thus in the first half of the nineteenth century, the College of Fort St. George was responsible for bringing out many works in Tamil.

#### *Miṇāṭcicuntaram Pillai (1815–1876)*

Miṇāṭcicuntaram Pillai was a famous poet and a great pundit or *mahāvidwān* of the nineteenth century. He was the *ātīṇam* poet of the Tiruvāvaṭuturai Mutt. He was responsible for producing many scholars in Tamil including U.V. Cāmināṭa Iyer. Miṇāṭcicuntaram Pillai's most notable works are the *Murukan Piḷḷaittamil*, *Tiruvīṭaikkalik Kuravañci Cūta Caṅkitai*, *Kuṭantait Tiripantāti*, *Akilāṇṭanayaki Mālai*, *Ampalavāṇa Tēcikar Kalam-pakam*, *Vātpōkkik Kalampakam*, *Tiruvīṭaimarutūr Ulā*, and *Cuppiramaniya Tēcikar Neñcuviṭu Tūtu*. He wrote many *talapurāṇams*, including the *Uraiyūrppurāṇam*, *Ārrūrppurāṇam*, *Tirukkuṭantaippurāṇam*, *Tirupperunturaippurāṇam* and *Viḷat-toṭṭippurāṇam*. His works, full of devotional fervour, bear upon Śaivism. He was renowned as a poet who could compose poems in no time. He wrote the largest number of works in Tamil. However his fame as a poet rests today on a minor work entitled the *Cēkkilār Piḷḷaittamil*. His works were loaded with descriptions, images and ideas borrowed from ancient literature.

It is said Mīṇāṭcicuntaram Pillai and his disciple Tēvarācap Pillai wrote the epic *Kucēlōpākkiyāṇam*, based on Kucēlar's story found in the *Mahābhārata*. The work was written in the *viruttam* verse rhythm and in a beautiful style.

### *Rāmaliṅkar (1823–1874)*

Rāmaliṅkar Cuvāmikaḷ was a born poet. He himself believed that his capacity to compose poems was not acquired by learning but was derived from the eternal grace of God. This belief of his is reflected in many of his poems. When his poems were collected and printed in book form under the title *Arutpā*, a case was filed in the court by Ārumukanāvalar and his followers protesting that only the poems of *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvācakam* could be called as *arutpā*. Despite this difference with Rāmaliṅkar, Ārumukanāvalar respected him as a noble soul and this is revealed in an incident at the court. When once Rāmaliṅkar entered the court, Ārumukanāvalar stood up as a mark of respect for that great man. When questioned by his followers for his act of reverence, Ārumukanāvalar said "I never criticised Rāmaliṅkar, although I objected to his devotional poems being called *arutpā*. He is a noble soul and a man of character. Therefore I respect and honour him." Rāmaliṅkar was respected in his life-time for leading a virtuous life. He was a great saint known for his kind and lovable heart which bled for the distress of others. This is revealed by the following remarkable line: "My heart dried up at the sight of dried crops in the field." He further said, "Oh Lord! I don't have the liking to attain salvation; but I do have the ambition to make all living beings happy." That he was the embodiment of love and mercy is borne out from two sections of his work, captioned, *Piḷḷaic Cīruviṇṇappam* and *Piḷḷaip Peruviṇṇappam*.

Though Rāmaliṅkar lived for a long time in the city of Madras, he was repelled by the ostentatious life there. He himself wore white clothes and lead a simple life. He cared for the welfare of all people irrespective of their castes. He appealed to God through his poems that people should live without hunger and should be released from the cycle of birth and death. In the evening of his life, Rāmaliṅkar lived at Vadalur near Chidambaram and established two organisations, the *Cattiya Nāṇa Capai* and the *Cattiya Tarumac Cālai*. The pith of his philosophy was that one should worship all beings realising that God resides in them; that the basic

principle of life is to show kindness to all beings; and that the essence of religion is that all living beings are essentially one and the same.

Rāmalīṅkar composed more than 6,000 poems and they were compiled under the title *Arutpā*. The work is divided into six sections called *tirumuṛaikaḷ*. Besides, he wrote two prose works, the *Maṇumuṛaikaṇṭa Vācakam* and the *Cīvakārūṇya Oḷukkam*. His prose style is rather cumbersome and difficult to comprehend. Whereas his poems are incomparable in their simplicity, clarity and mellifluousness. His poems composed with effortless ease, possess the quality to move the hearts of those who read or hear the emotion-charged devotional songs. Some of the poems which were composed on the model of *akam* poets of yore are found in *līkitamālai* and other chapters of the *Arutpā*. These poems are known for their literary grace. They portray also the purity and simplicity of his life. Many poets before him had transformed the twenty-centuries old Tamil poetry from its rigidity to mellifluousness, pliability and clarity and helped to contribute to its growth. To this, the nineteenth century poet Rāmalīṅkar added easy readability, simplicity and the quality to melt the heart of the readers and thereby gave a new turn to the growth of Tamil poetry.

Besides composing several thousand verses in the *viruttam* metre, Rāmalīṅkar wrote many verses in the form of folk songs, like the *kīrttaṇai*, *kummi*, *kaṇṇi*, and *cintu*. His principle was, that nothing but the eternal grace of God should form the theme for poems.

Those that praise Ampalam,  
Where Siva danced  
Are true poems  
Others are false ones.

Those that praise Naṭarācar (Siva)  
Are useful poems  
Others are useless ones.<sup>1</sup>

He gave expressions to his experiences in verse because of his loving interest that everyone in the world should share the divine bliss he himself experienced.

Why did I compose?  
Because of kindness,



That you should also experience  
The pleasure I had experienced.<sup>2</sup>

Since he wanted that his poems should be easily read and understood by all, he composed them without unnecessary pedantry. He paid low premium to scholarship because he believed that man's stature in life will be improved only by devotion and understanding of the supreme rather than by sheer book-learning. Rāmalīṅkar while describing the qualities of God mentioned, "God, the personification of happiness, bestows that happiness both on the literates as well as on the illiterates." Rāmalīṅkar's poems transcended the barriers of caste and creed and preached the philosophy of eclecticism. In one of the poems he said that, "without considering any differences whosoever treats with compassion the life of other beings as his own, there in his heart dances God." Rāmalīṅkar's compassion for other living beings was such that he detested killing animals for their meat. His reason for abstinence from killing is clearly revealed in one of the poems, where he says, "I see the reflection of God in all beings and respect them as such." Almost all his poems were based on two essential truths, that of eclecticism and compassion for all living beings.

In the religious sphere of Rāmalīṅkar broke with the tradition. It was customary on the part of Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites not to worship and sing the praise of Viṣṇu and Śiva respectively. Whereas the eclectic spirit of Rāmalīṅkar soared high to transcend these man-made limitations and composed devotional poems like *Śrī Rāmanāmat Tiruppatikam*, *Śrī Vīrarākavap Perumāḷ Pōṛṇit Tiruppaṇcakam* and *Ilakkumi Tōttiram*.

Some of the poems like *Āṇantakkaḷippu* and the *Veṇṇilāppāṭṭu*, which were modelled on folk songs, are appreciated by many. He also wrote the traditional type of *ulās* like *Tiruvulāppēru*, *Tiruvulā Viyappu*, *Tiruvulāt Tiram* and *Tirukkōlac Cīrappu*. These are all highly imaginative poems highlighting the mystical love of the heroine who falls in love with Śiva while he was on a procession. Besides Rāmalīṅkar wrote *tūtu* poems in which storks and parrots were sent as messengers to inform the distress of the heroine to the hero. There are many devotional poems in the *Arutpā* in the tradition of *akam* poems. Rāmalīṅkar had great respect for the Śaiva saints, and their devotional hymns. There are verses which extol the greatness of *Tiruvācakam*. Some



of the lines of the *Tēvāram* and the *Tiruvācakam* and the ideas found in the *Tirukkuraḷ* were aptly used in his poems. Imitating Māṇikkavācakar he composed devotional songs that end in *untipara* as in the poems of *Tiruvuntiyār* and in *Aṭaikkalamē* Rāmalīṅkar's *Āṇanta Mēliṭu*, which is based on folk songs, was in fact a song sung by girls at the time of a game played with balls. One other type of verse *Āṇanta Mēliṭu* is a song played on the conch. Other songs that were sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments like the trumpet also found a place in his devotional songs.

Rāmalīṅkar's poems written in a simple style, are pregnant with subtle philosophical experiences. The poems in *Kāṭcikkanni* belong to this category. The following poem is a classical example:

The scenes witnessed at the hall of Chidambaram  
Is a marvellous scene, Oh maid!  
Is a marvellous scene.<sup>3</sup>

I gave up ignorance like caste and religion  
There I found enlightenment, Oh maid!  
I found enlightenment.<sup>4</sup>

### *Kōpālakiruṣṇa Pārati*

In olden days, certain verse forms suitable to music found a place in literature. This can be seen in the works of hymnodists. In the nineteenth century certain musical verses like the *kīrttaṇai* and the *cintu* found a place in literature. Poets like Tirikūṭarācapak Kavirāyar composed such types of poems, and they were applauded for their literary excellence. Literary works were written in *kīrttaṇai* only in the nineteenth century.

Kōpālakiruṣṇa Pāratiyār composed certain *kīrttaṇai* like the *Tirunīlakaṇṭa Nāyaṇār Kīrttaṇai*, *Iyarpakai Nāyaṇār Carittirak Kīrttaṇai* and *Nantaṇār Carittirak Kīrttaṇai*, narrating the life-story of the Śaiva saints. Because of the popularity of these musical compositions, especially the *Nantaṇār Carittirak Kīrttaṇaikaḷ*, they themselves became models for others to write. The *Nantaṇār Carittirak Kīrttaṇai* spread all over the country and captivated the hearts of the people. Nantaṇār, who was an agricultural labourer and Harijan by birth, wished to go to Chidambaram to worship Natarja. His master would not let him go. However he managed to get the

permission of his master to go on a pilgrimage to Čhidambaram. There with the grace of God he got the chance to offer worship and become one with Him. Nantaṇār's story was narrated in a gripping manner in Čēkkiḷār's *Periyapurāṇam*. Kōpālairuṣṇa Pāratiyār narrated the same story still more movingly as a musical composition. Since these musical verses gained immense popularity in the country, their pattern of music became the model for *kīrttaṇai* subsequently. Even the famous poet, Cuppiramaṇiya Pāratiyār, simply quoted Kōpālakiruṣṇa's *kīrttaṇai* and its *rāga* as the most suitable one for his own compositions meant for singing with *rāga* and *tāla*. Such was the pride of place Gopalakrishna's musical compositions held among the Tamils. However in the earlier stages some poets expressed grave concern over the textual variations of the story found in the *Periyapurāṇam* as well as the occurrences of grammatical mistakes. Even his contemporary, and the great scholar and poet Mīṇātcicuntaram Pillai at first hesitated to give a preface to the *Nantaṇār Carittirak Kīrttaṇai*. But when he heard Pāratiyār's recital, Pillai was so moved by its music that he gave a special preface to this work.

#### *Capāpati Mudaliar and Others*

Among the leading poets of the nineteenth century Aṣṭāvatāṇam Capāpati Mudaliar was one. He wrote many poetical works including *talapurāṇam*, *kalampakam*, *kuṛavañci*, *antāti*, *catakam* and others. He was noted for composing rhythmic verses. He was the author of thirty-three poetical works. Many studied under him and became scholars in Tamil language and literature. However despite his celebrity in his days, his books are no longer studied by the people.

Toḷuvūr Vēlāyuta Mudaliar, (1832–1889) who was a disciple of Saint Rāmalīṅkar, wrote many poetical and prose works. Mudaliar spread the greatness of Rāmalīṅkar's *Arutpā* among the people. A great scholar in Sanskrit, Mudaliar translated the *parācarasmiruti* into Tamil prose. He also gave the prose versions of the *Periyapurāṇam* and the *Mārkkanṭēya Purāṇam*. He wrote some biographies and twenty-four poetical works.

Pūṇṭi Araṇkanāta Mudaliar (1837–1893) besides being a professor of Mathematics at the Madras Presidency College, was also a sound scholar both in English and Tamil literatures. He wrote an interesting work in Tamil, known as the *Kāccik Kalampakam*.

Only his *kalampakam* is read now. An older work of the same name sank into oblivion. Taṇṭapāṇi Cuvāmikaḷ or Murukatāca Cuvāmikaḷ was a sanyasi who composed many rhythmic poems like Aruṇakirinātar and became famous as Tiruppukal̥c Cāmiyār. He composed *antāti*, *kalampakam* and *catakam* type of works on Lord Murukan. He wrote the biography of Aruṇakirinātar as a *purāṇam*. Tantapani Camikal's *Pulavarpurāṇam* narrates the life of poets together with fictitious stories woven around their lives.

Caravaṇapperumāl̥ Kavirāyar, who was the court poet of the king of Ramanathapuram, wrote the *Paṇaviṭutūtu*, the *Acuvamētayāka Purāṇam* and other works. Irāmānuca Kavirāyar, who lived in Madras, composed the *Pārttacāratimālai*, the *Varataraja perumāl̥ Patirruppattantāti* and other works. The Vaiṣṇava poet, Vīrarākava Mudaliar wrote many devotional works including the *Tiruvēṅkaṭak Kalampakam*, *Tirukkaṇṇamaṅkai Mālai*, *Varatarājar Paṅcarattiṇam*, *Tiruvēṅkaṭamuṭaiyāṇ Paṅcarattiṇam*, and *Peruntēviyār Paṅcarattiṇam*. The poet Māmpal̥ak Kavicciṅka Nāvalar (1836–1884), who was patronized by the King of Ramanathapuram, wrote many independent poems and one minor work. Another poet, Verimaṅkaipākakkavirāyar who had the support of the Zamindar of Maruṅkāpuṇi wrote *kuravaṅci*, *ulā* and *kōvai* type of works. Nirkkunayoki's ethical work the *Vivēkacintāmaṇi* was avidly read by primary school children till recently. Its style is known for its simplicity and verve. One other poet, Vīramārttāṇṭa Tēvar wrote the stories of *Paṅcatantra* in *viruttam* poetry. The two brothers Vicākapperumāl̥ Iyer and Caravaṇapperumāl̥ Iyer taught Tamil language and literature to many as well as composed some literary works.

The kings of Ramanathapuram patronized poets and thereby fostered the growth of Tamil. The king, Mutturāmaliṅkat Tēvar was himself a poet and wrote some poetical works. Some of the members of the royal court like Poṇṇucāmit Tēvar and his son Pāṇṭitturait Tēvar contributed much to the well-being of poets. Both of them wrote many works in Tamil. Pāṇṭitturai Tēvar was responsible for establishing Tamil Caṅkam in Madurai in the last century.

### Prose Works

A Tamil scholar, Tiruccirāmpala Tēcikar retold Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Uttara-Kāṇṭam* of *Rāmāyaṇa* in prose.

Vīracāmi Cettiar was a leading writer of the nineteenth cen-

tury, with prose works on some of the leading poets like Kampar, Kāṭitācar Kāṣamēkap Pulavar, Pukaḷēnti and Oṭṭakkūttar to his credit. One of his works the *Vinōtaracamañcarī* was very popular in the nineteenth century. It is rich in humorous essays, caricatures as well as interesting anecdotes.

Cōmacuntara Nāyakar (1846–1901) was widely known for his religious discourses and debates. He wrote some religious prose works like the *Caiva Cūḷamaṇi* and the *Cittānta Nāṇapotam*. His prose works are loaded with Sanskrit words and makes difficult reading.

During the second half of the nineteenth century newspapers like the *Tiṇavarttamāṇi* (1856), *Jaṇavinōṭiṇi* (1870) and *Vivēkacin-tāmaṇi* were responsible for creating and sustaining interest in Tamil among the public by publishing many interesting and instructive articles. In 1882 the Tamil daily, the *Swadēsamitran* started its publication. Many research articles on various aspects of Tamil language and literature were published in the *Centamiḷ*, a Tamil journal published by the members of the Madurai Tamil Sangam.

Nākai Taṇṭapāṇip Pillai wrote some novels like the *Catānantar*, *Kalācuntari Ēkampañcanatam* and *Māyāvati* in the early decades of this century. He also wrote the life history of Buddha and other prose works.

### Some Other Works

Accutānanta Cuvāmi (1850–1902) wrote besides, the life of devotees like *Pirakalātan*, *Tiruvan* and *Cakkupāy*, many philosophical and prayer songs.

Venpāpappuli Vēlucāmip Pillai (1854–1926) wrote the *Kantapurāṇam* in 5,665 venpās. It is the only major work in Tamil which was written in venpā metre. Besides he wrote the *Tēvāra Cīvatala Venpā*, three *talapurāṇas* and a *Nīrōṭṭaka yamaka Antāti*.

Caṇmukam Pillai (1858–1905) wrote an *ulā* for Mylapore and a *talapurāṇam* for the Śaiva shrine at Tirumullaivāyil. Besides, he wrote some minor poetical works as well as commentaries for certain Tamil literary works.



NOTES

1. Ūraṇ Aṭikal (ed.), *Tiruaruṭpā* (Vadalur, 1978), pms 5098, 5096, p. 950.
2. *Ibid.*, pm 5594, p. 1017.
3. *Ibid.*, pm 4914, p. 929.
4. *Ibid.*, pm 4947, p. 932.



## Islamic Literature

### *Works on Islam*

When Islam spread in the Tamil country, many Muslims lived like Tamils, learnt and studied Tamil literary and grammatical works and wrote literary compositions concerning their religion. Some of their important works are *Cīrāppurāṇam*, *Mukaiyṭṭpurāṇam*, *Nākūrppurāṇam* and *Nāyakarpurāṇam*. Muslim poets wrote many interesting works in each one of the Tamil literary genres like *antāti*, *ulā*, *paraṇi*, *kalampakam*, *kōvai tūtu*, *piḷḷaittamil*, *catakam* and *vaṇṇam*. Besides they produced all types of literary compositions for their religion, analogous to those works that had been written for Saivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Jainism. They also wrote many philosophical and rhythmical poems similar to the verses of Tāyumāṇavar and Aruṇakirinātar respectively.

Muslim poets wrote some interesting prose works in the twentieth century. To explain the ideas pertaining to their religion in prose or poetry they used certain Arabic words. They were also used in non-religious works like short stories and essays, to describe a Muslim family's conversation or for that matter anything pertaining to their customs and manners. In general, however, little difference is seen when the Tamil style of Muslim writers is compared with that of the others. Many of their works were in fact, written in an emotional, smooth-flowing and beautiful style.

### *Cīrāppurāṇam*

A Tamil Muslim, Cītakkāti or Syed Khader, who was known for his unbounded generosity, lived in the seventeenth century

He was famed for his generous help to the poor and the needy. Paṭikkācup Pulavar's poems reflect the greatness of this noble man. One of his poems says that "only when Cītakāti was born again in this world, the poets will prosper."

During Cītakāti's period, the Tamil Muslims had to learn Arabic in order to know the life of Prophet Muhammad and his teachings. The absence of a suitable work embodying the teachings of the Prophet in Tamil was keenly felt by Cītakāti. Therefore he cherished the ambition to bring out such a work in Tamil with the help of scholars, proficient both in Arabic and Tamil. At first he was able to find a scholar in Arabic, but not a Tamil poet among the Muslims. However when he learnt about poet Umaru, who was then a poet in a king's court, Cītakāti invited him, expressed his desire and requested him to compose a poetical work that would relate the story of the Prophet as well as the core of his teachings. Poet Umaru acceded to his request and started composing the monumental work, *Cīrāppurāṇam*. However, before the work could be completed, Cītakāti passed away. It was again taken up when another noble man, Abdul Kasim Marakkāyar came forward to extend the necessary financial support to see the work through. Umaruppulavar paid a tribute to him at the end of each hundredth poem in the *Cīrāppurāṇam*, as Kampar had done earlier to Caṭaiyappar in the Tamil version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. *Cīrāppurāṇam* contains 5,027 verses, and it narrates a large part of the prophet's life story. The remaining part of the story was completed by Pani Ahmad Marakkāyar, under the pseudonym Ciṇṇaccīra. The term *cīrā* is derived from the Arabic word *sirat* which means a biography.

Following the tradition of the Tamil epics, the *Cīrāppurāṇam* too contains descriptions of the country (*nāṭṭuppaṭalam*) as well as the city (*Nakarappaṭalam*.) While describing the Prophet's country of birth, the poet describes only the flora, fauna and avifauna of the Tamil country but not Arabia. Again in keeping with the Tamil tradition, the country is divided into the four-fold regional landscapes and is described accordingly. Although Arabia is a desert, the descriptions found in the epic, brings to the readers' mind only the Tamil country, where rivers would be in spate during monsoons. Again the descriptions of Arabia, remind the readers of people living in montane regions of the Tamil country, their millet fields, their musical instruments, the fruits, and the thunder-

ing streams which fall from the cliffs. The description of the city of Mecca in *nakarappaṭalam* is nothing but a description of the city of Madurai. In the shopping centres of Mecca, sandal-wood, akil-wood, ivory and other precious articles of trade from Tamil Nadu are found. The *Cīṛāppurāṇam*, therefore, highlights not only the poet's patriotism of his mother-land but his mind soaked in the old Tamil literary works. Similes and assonances are delectably used in verses. Their rhythm is also mellifluous and captures the hearts of readers. The liberal use of Arabic words makes it difficult reading in some places for non-Muslims. The Tamil Muslims in Ceylon regard the *Cīṛāppurāṇam* as their basic text for their religious life.

The following first invocatory poem in Umaruppulavar's *Cīṛāppurāṇam* is eclectic in nature and contains high philosophical thoughts.

He is the wealth of wealth  
He is the most precious of precious things  
He is the essence of purest essence  
He is the fragrance of fragrant flowers  
He is the atom of atoms  
He is the luminary of the most luminous lights  
He is the prettiest of the prettiest forms  
He is the embryo of embryos of all beings:  
Such being thy qualities,  
Who had performed austerities  
To you we surrender  
Our soul heart and mind.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Poems of Kuṇaṅkuṭi Mastāṇ (1788–1835)*

Sultan Abdul Kadir was the real name of the famous Kuṇaṅkuṭi Mastāṇ. He became a sanyasi and composed many philosophical verses embodying the quintessence of Islamic thought. Nevertheless his poems in general express eclectic views. Many of his verses are similar to Tāyumāṇavar's both in style and in expression of high philosophical thoughts. Therefore Mastāṇ's verses had an universal appeal. Many Hindu poets mentioned him with reverence in their works. For example, Aiyācāmi Mudaliar and the well known poet Caravaṇapperumālaiyar composed poetical works like the *Kuṇaṅkuṭi Nātar Patirruppattantāti* and the *Nāṇmanimālai* respectively in honour of Kuṇaṅkuṭi Mastāṇ.

Mastān used many colloquial words in his verses.

### *Others Poets*

Sheik Abdul Kādar Nayinār Labbai (-1848) was a linguist. He wrote two *talapurāṇams*, one *kalampakam* and an *antāti* on the city of Mecca.

The poet Ibrahim (1863–1908) wrote in several literary types, which included *tiruppukal*, *kalampakam*, *pillaittamiḷ* and *antāti*. They were pregnant with Islamic ideas. He composed altogether fourteen poetical works.

Cavvātuppulavar wrote many interesting poems containing noble thoughts. Muhammad Khan became famous under the pseudonym Cintuk Kalañciyam. One other poet Abdul Majid composed many *Kīrtanaikaḷ* on Prophet Muhammad. A muslim poet came to be called Vaṇṇak Kaḷñciyap Pulavar for his extraordinary ability to compose certain rhythmic poems termed as *vaṇṇam*. He was the author of the *Mōkitīnpurāṇam*. It narrates the life story of an enlightened soul who lived at the Nakur Mosque. Captivated by the literary beauty of the work, a rich man gave his daughter in marriage to the poet.

Poet Muhammad Hussain wrote an ethical work intended for women in *kural venpās*. It is known as the *Peṇputtimālai*.

The twentieth century poet, Paṇaikkulam Abdul Majid wrote the *Kavippūñcōlai*, *Ilakkiyappūñkā*, and *Tamiḷ Nāṭṭu Iṣlāmiyap Pulavarkaḷ*. All his works have literary merit and possess a rich style. The works indicate the author's eagerness to express truth as he had understood it. All these qualities are reflected in his poetical work, the *Nāyaka Venpā* also. It narrates the life of Prophet Muhammad with imagination and abounds in similes in the *venpā* metre. His verses in *venpā* metre are comparable to Pukaḷēnti's Naḷavenpā. Majid followed the established literary conventions of Tamil epics while composing the *Nāyaka Venpā*.

The most important Islamic work of this century is the *Neñcil Niṟainta Napimaṇi*. It narrates the life of Prophet Muhammad and his gospel in Tamil with the least admixture of foreign loan words. It contains 3,663 *kaṇṇikaḷ* or two-line rhythmic verses. They are known for their smooth flowing and soul-stirring style. The author, Cirājpāk Kavirāyar's scholarship in Tamil and his eagerness to compose an interesting work are revealed in each one of the poems in the work.

Many Muslim writers at the present time are writing interesting works in chaste Tamil.

### NOTES

1. Kaviñar Nāccikuḷattār (ed.), *Umaruppulavar's Cīrāppurāṇam* (Nāccikuḷam, 1974), p. 1.



## Christian Literature

### *Tattuva Pōtakar*

In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries two missionaries, Xavier and Pritto translated the Christian ethics, hymns and methods of worship into Tamil. Another missionary, Robert de Nobili, known as Tattuva Pōtakar lived in Madurai like a Brahmin Sanyasi, with a rosary in hand, wearing wooden sandals, ear-rings, sacred thread and a saffron cloth on his body. He ate vegetarian food to gain the respect of the Tamils and in many ways lived like an orthodox Tamil. He learnt Sanskrit and even chanted the Vedic hymns. He learnt Tamil and wrote *Ātma Nirṇayam*, *Nāṇōpatēca Kāṇṭam* and other prose works. Though his prose style was heavily loaded with colloquial words and phrases, he can rightly be regarded as the forerunner of modern Tamil prose. No one during this period wrote so many prose works in Tamil. Then came Joseph Beschi, known widely as Vīramāmuṇivar, to modernize the Tamil prose. It is interesting to note here, that the forerunners of modern Tamil prose were Europeans.

### *Vīramāmuṇivar*

Vīramāmuṇivar came from Italy to Tamil Nadu to spread Christianity. He is remembered today for his contribution to Tamil language and literature. His monumental work, the *Tēmpāvaṇi* brought him immortality. He modernised the Tamil *nikanṭus*, which gave synonyms under different headings, and also brought

out the first Tamil dictionary entitled the *Caturakarāṭi*. Besides he reformed the then existing two short and two long vowels to their present form. Before this the two short vowels e and o ( *ஏ*, *ஓ* ) were written with a dot on top ( *ஏ̇*, *ஓ̇* ) and their corresponding long vowels ē and ō ( *ஏ̌*, *ஓ̌* ) had no curve markers ( *ஏ̌*, *ஓ̌* ) to indicate they were long vowels. His reform of Tamil scripts is even now praised for its usefulness.

Vīramāmuṇivar composed besides the *Tēmpāvaṇi* other poetical works such as the *Tirukkāvalūr Kalampakam* and the *Kittēriyammāl Ammānai*. His grammatical work the *Tomṇūl Viḷakkam* is regarded by scholars as an important work and therefore they named it as the *Kuṭṭit Tolkāppiyam*, after the famous grammatical work *Tolkāppiyum*. In addition to this, he analysed the differences between literary and spoken Tamil and wrote two separate grammatical works entitled *Centamiḷ Ilakkaṇam* and *Koṭuntamiḷ Ilakkaṇam* respectively. He also translated the *Tomṇūl Viḷakkam* and the *Tirukkural* into Latin.

Vīramāmuṇivar wrote some prose works also. The most famous among them is the humorous work, *Paramārṭta Kuruviṇ Katai*. It is a collection of witty short stories written long before the emergence of short story as a genre in Tamil. He wrote for the seminarists a book of ethics called *Vētiyar Olukkam*, which was translated both into Telugu and Kannada. Among his other major works in prose *Nāṇak Kaṇṇāṭi*, *Vēta Viḷakkam* and *Pētamaruttal* are worth mentioning. Among them the *Nāṇak Kaṇṇāṭi* was rendered into Kannada.

The epic, *Tēmpāvaṇi* narrates the life of Jesus Christ together with other traditional stories in 3,615 verses. Vīramāmuṇivar followed the tradition of Tamil epics like the *Periyapurāṇam* and the *Kamparāmāyaṇam* while describing Palestine and Jerusalem in *nāṭṭuppaṭalam* and *nakarappaṭalam* respectively in *Tēmpāvaṇi*. Likewise the Tamil literary tradition was followed while classifying the landscape into five regions. Instead of describing the familiar scenes natural to Palestine like camels and date-palms, he described in his epics birds like the swan and cuckoo, animals like the elephant, and trees like the *acōka* (*Uvaria longifolia*) peculiar to the Tamil country. In short the descriptions found in *nāṭṭuppaṭalam* and *nakarappaṭalam* resemble more the Tamil country and a Tamil city than Palestine and Jerusalem respectively. Since it was an epic intended for the Tamils he chose to describe

only the scenes familiar to them. To make it an epic of the soil, he gave Tamil names to the principal characters in the epic. For example, Joseph became Vaḷaṇ, John became Karuṇaiyaṇ, Isaac became Nakulaṇ and another character was named Civaṇ. The *Tēmpāvaṇi* contains, in many places, lines and phrases found in the *Tirukkural* and the *Kamparamāyaṇam*.

*Tēmpāvaṇi* praises the life of ascetics. Equal tribute is also paid to the family life led by Cūcaiyappar and Mary. In contrast to other epics in Tamil, there are only brief descriptions of love scenes in the *Tēmpāvaṇi*. This was perhaps in consonance with the ascetic and devotional life led by Vīramāmuṇivar.

### *Other Christian Scholars*

The German missionary, C.T.E. Rhenius (A.D. 1790–1838) came to South India to preach Christianity. He was a good speaker and writer in Tamil. He wrote some poetical, religious and two non-religious works.

In the nineteenth century the English missionary Robert Caldwell (A.D. 1814–1891), who came to Tamil Nadu to preach Christianity, was drawn towards Tamil. He spent several years in a comparative study of the developed (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Tulu and Kutaku) and several other undeveloped Dravidian languages and wrote his *magnum opus*, *The Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages* in English which sheds light on the importance of Dravidian languages in the all-India context. In this work he analysed the grammatical structure of all the Dravidian languages and proved the affinity among them. He also pointed out the similarities that exist among their many root words. While engaged in missionary work in the southern part of Tamil Nadu, he learnt to speak and write Tamil well. He wrote some works in Tamil regarding the lifestyle of the people of Tamil Nadu. Several prose works including *Nāṇak Kōyil* and *Nar̥karuṇait Tiyaṇamālai* were also written by him.

### *Pope (1820–1907)*

Another English missionary G.U. Pope came to Tamil Nadu, learnt Tamil and contributed much to its growth. He was the first scholar to teach subjects like Philosophy, Mathematics and Logic in Tamil. He wrote the grammar of the Tamil language both in

English and Tamil. Later he translated Tamil classics like the *Tirukkural*, *Tiruvācakam* and *Nālaṭiyār* into English. Some of the verses in the *Purapporuḷ Venpāmālai*, *Puraṇāṇāru* and some other stray verses were also translated into English. His love for Tamil was so great that he wanted the words 'A student of Tamil', to be incised on his tomb.

#### *Vētanāyakam Pillai (A.D. 1826–1889)*

Vētanāyakam Pillai moved intimately with the great scholar and poet, Mīnāṭcicuntaram Pillai and learnt Tamil under his tutelage. Vētanāyakam held the position of a munsif in a district court. He was also well trained in Tamil music as well as English. He was the first scholar who wrote the legal codes in Tamil. Though he moved closely with Mīnāṭcicuntaram Pillai, Vētanāyakam never followed in his footsteps in writing *talapurāṇam*, *piḷḷaittamiḷ* and *kalampakam*.<sup>3</sup> However he wrote two *antāti* works, namely, the *Tiruvaruḷ Antāti* and *Tēvamātā Antāti*. Even these works did not conform to old tradition, for he got rid of difficult word-embellishment like *yamakam* and *tiripu* and composed them in a simple and easy style. Besides these two traditional works he wrote *Peṇmatimālai*, an interesting work intended for the women of Tamil Nadu. Other poetical works were the *Carva Camaya Camaracak Kīrttaṇai*, *Catyavētak Kīrttaṇai*, *Tiruvaruḷmālai* and *Tēva Tōttiramālai*. Among them, the first two are musical compositions of *kīrttaṇas* and the latter two are devotional poems. Apart from poetical works, he wrote for the first time in Tamil a new genre of work entitled *Piratāpa Mudaliar Carittiram* in 1876 and *Cukuṇa Cuntari* in 1887 which brought him fame as the pioneer of Tamil novels.

Vētanāyakam was a Christian, yet he had an enlightened outlook. He moved closely with Saivite scholars as well as the Head of Tiruvavatuturai Mutt, a Saiva religious institution. These enabled him to describe with first-hand knowledge the life of a Hindu family in his novel.

Vētanāyakam Pillai's verses were known for its sparkling wit and humour. These can be seen very clearly in some of his verses written on the model of folk songs. Under this heading comes *nalunkuppattu*, which is sung at the time of marriages. One such *nalunkuppāṭṭu* composed by Pillai, portrays how a bridegroom is teased by his brothers-in-law at the time of marriage.



Oh Bridegroom

What a lucky man you are  
To marry our sister.  
With long plaited hair,  
And sweet voice too.

Full of mud is your body;  
Because of farming.  
Uncleaned are your teeth (for a long time)  
To clean them will be inadequate  
Even the water of nine rivers.  
Stale gruel was your food before,  
Now it's milk-rice  
Have no fear  
Hundred is your age!

Vētanāyakam gave poetic form to some of the experience he had in his life. These verses act like outlets and offer consolation for many who suffer like him in their vocations. Since he lived an upright life, every word in his verse forcefully expresses the truth. A munsif in a district court, Pillai was hard put to it hear everyday cases of questionable nature and equally false pleadings of lawyers. The following poem expresses the relief and happiness he had after retirement.

Enough, enough is the prestige of position  
What happiness is there for us—oh mind?  
Ceaseless work always  
What benefits have we gained?  
Like a factory machine is that vocation  
Like a sugar-cane we are squeezed in it  
enough, enough.

A bundle of lies is Cuppu Iyer's case  
Myraids of loop-hole are in Cuntara Iyer's case  
Appu Iyer will concoct a story  
Ananta Iyer will build castles in the air  
The defendant tells a world of lies  
The plaintiff speaks a universe of lies  
Oh the judge is a talkative person  
The client swears lies on shastras  
Enough, enough.... this prestige.

Vanti's son plucked a flower from the sky  
On seeing it, the blind sent an arrow



The dumb spoke ill of him  
On hearing it, the deaf seems to have laughed. <sup>2</sup>

The abovementioned verses indicate Vētanāyakam's consummate skill in using simple words to express his painful feelings about his legal profession. The verses have assonances and have a rhythm of their own. Though he was a munsif in the district court engaged in giving judgements of many cases, Pillai earned a name as a man of probity and performed his duty conscientiously. In the following verse, he yearned for the Divine Grace to perform his duty as a judge with propriety and fairness.

Oh Almighty offer your blessings  
To give judgements with fairness  
Give me the power  
Not to offend the lawyers  
    with harsh words  
Not to give room for  
    subordinate's complaints  
Not to swerve from uprightness even in poverty  
Not to give in to unfairness at the  
    pleadings of relatives.  
In the presence of God of Justice  
False witnesses should shudder  
Injustice should hide its face  
And those who receive bribes  
    should die of shame  
Oh Almighty offer your blessings  
To give judgements with fairness. <sup>3</sup>

Vētanayākam's noble mind is reflected in the above mentioned rhythmic verse. Through this simple poem, he brought out the norms to be followed in the legal profession. Most of the words are the ones commonly used in the spoken language. They express the meaning clearly and touch the very core of the heart.

Some of Vētanayākam's verses bitterly criticise the officials who take bribes. In such verses satire dominates and leaves a powerful impact on the reader's mind. The following paraphrase of verse makes a comparison between thieves and officials who have an itching palm. Thieves break into houses only on new moon days. Whereas certain officials take bribes in broad day-light. If the thieves are caught, they are brought before the court of law.

There in the court, officials grab their money in the day, Such officials are worse than the worst thieves. Some refuse to take bribes directly, but get them as presents during their family celebrations.

In another verse Vētanāyakam highlights the truth that differences of caste are unreal and that everyone is born equal.

Vētanāyakam Pillai wrote certain interesting letters to his friends in verses. One such letter which he wrote to the Head of the Tiruvavatuturāi Mutt, mentions that though he had returned home after seeing the Head of the Mutt, Pillai's mind seemed to have lingered there. That beautiful prose poem is as follows:

I returned yesterday night itself  
After seeing you personally  
Undoubtedly my body had returned home  
But not my heart  
Even if others tell of its return, I disbelieve  
Please send my heart here. <sup>4</sup>

Though written in *viruttam* metre, the verse is in the simplest prose. Both his prose and poetical works reveal that the spirit of Tamil language was at his beck and call and served him willingly at all times.

#### *Kriṣṇa Pillai (A.D. 1827–1900)*

The poet Kriṣṇa Pillai was born a Vaiṣṇavite but became a convert to Christianity at the age of thirty. Thereafter, he became an ardent devotee of Jesus Christ. He wrote religious works like *Iraṭcaṇiya Yāttirikam*, *Iraṭcaṇiya Camaya Nirṇayam*, *Iraṭcaṇiya Manōkaram* and *Iraṭcaṇiyak Kural*. The Tamil style, imagination and usage in these works reveal his deep study of the *Kam-parāmāyaṇam*. Among his works, the epic *Iraṭcaṇiya Yāttirikam* is the most important one. It contains, 3,800 verses. Most of the verses in this work were written in a simple and flowing style. However there are twenty-one verses which show that the author was adept at writing *yamakam*, *tiripu*, *cilētai* and *maṭakku* verses. In those days these verses with a play on words were regarded as a sign of excellence among poets. The Tamil epic, *Iraṭcaṇiya Yāttirikam* was based on John Bunyan's famous work *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It was written for Tamils, in the Tamil literary tradition.

Like the hymns of Alvārs and Nāyaṇmārs, the devotional verses in this work melt the hearts of the readers. The Tamilized version of the epic narrates the story of the human soul, how torn by grief, finally gains the grace of Christ and progresses through life to heaven. The hero of the epic is a Christian.

### NOTES

1. S. Vētanāyakam Pillai, *Carva Camaya Camaracak Kīrttaṇaikaḷ* (Madras, 1915), *Kīrttaṇai*, 191, p. 187.
2. *Ibid.*, *Kīrttaṇaikaḷ* 163–65, pp. 145–47.
3. *Ibid.*, *Kīrttaṇai*, 162, pp. 143–44.
4. M.R. Kantacāmik Kavirāyar (ed.), *Taṇicciyyut Cintāmaṇi*, Pt. I (Madurai, 1908), p. 423.

## Tamil Literature Abroad

Ever since historic times, Sri Lanka has been contributing much to the growth of Tamil language and literature. Poets from the northern and the eastern parts of Sri Lanka known as Yālpṇaṇam and Maṭṭakkalappu respectively wrote many works. Seven verses in the *Caṅkam* anthology were composed by Īlattup Pūtantēvaṇār, a poet from Sri Lanka. Up to the eighteenth century Tamil was the language of bureaucracy in Sri Lanka and many Singhalese learnt it. Some among them made contributions to Tamil language and literature. Even in the recent past Singhalese kings signed their treaties with the British in Tamil. This proves that Tamil literature has been developing in the country from time immemorial.

### *Tamil Works of Sri Lanka*

In the sixteenth century the poet Aracakēcari translated Kalidasa's *Raguvamsa* into Tamil. It is an epic containing 2,400 verses. When minor works like *talapurāṇams*, *kōvai*, *ulā*, *kalam-pakam*, *catakam*, *tūtu*, and *antāti* were composed in the Tamil country these genres also became popular in Sri Lanka. As a result many *talapurāṇams* such as *Takkiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam*, *Kōṇācala Purāṇam*, *Puliyūrp Purāṇam*, *Citampara Capānāta Purāṇam*, *Civarāttirip Purāṇam*, *Ēkātacip Purāṇam*, *Cūtu Purāṇam*, *Val-aivīcu Purāṇam* and the *Kaṇaki Purāṇam* were written. The last three works are a departure from the old types of *purāṇams*. The

*Kaṇaki Purāṇam*, for example, relates the life of a prostitute. During the period of *purāṇas* many Christian religious works were written in Tamil. Poets like Murukēca Paṇṭitar composed ethical and other types of works. Another poet, Civacampup Pulavar wrote sixty poetical works. It is a custom among Tamils to sing while rocking the swing. These songs came under the category of folk songs, known as *ūñcal pāṭalkaḷ*. It was developed into a new genre, and many works on rocking the swing were written in Sri Lanka. The poet Navāliyūrc Cōmacuntaram composed more than 15,000 verses and became famous for his devotional poems on Murukaṇ, the presiding deity at Katirkāmam. He also wrote some interesting poems on the festival celebrated in the Tamil month of *Āṭi*. Poet Cōmacuntaram's devotional poems on Lord Murukaṇ, like the one that follows, were modelled on verses in the Cilappatikāram.

Chanting His praise in a garland  
of new Tamil poems  
Chanting His name, Kantā, Cukantā  
the incomparable one  
What eyes are they, if Katirkāmam\*  
is not seen?  
What eyes are they, if the brightness  
of camphor is not seen?

### *Tamil Folk Songs of Sri Lanka*

Since the people in Sri Lanka have been speaking Tamil for several centuries, it is not surprising that many folk songs have been in currency in the country. Now scholars are engaged in compiling them into an anthology. The efforts of Rāmaliṅkam bore fruit in an anthology of several hundred folk songs. There is very little difference between the folk songs of Sri Lanka and the Tamil country. This only shows the frequency of traffic that existed between these two countries and the miscegenation that had taken place several centuries ago. The following poem is a cradle-song sung by the women of Sri Lanka while rocking a child in a cradle.

Whether the grandma has beaten you  
With her hands that feeds you milk  
Whether the brother has beaten you

\* The famous Murukan temple in Sri Lankan is located at Katirkāman



With the string worn around the hip  
 Oh my fruit of a male palm tree,  
 Oh my sweet-smelling mango untouched by squirrel  
 I will ask, sleep my child.

The above folk song is familiar in Tamil Nadu also but with a difference. Instead of the line "Whether the brother has beaten you with the string worn around the hip" the folk-song in Tamil Nadu contains, "Whether the aunty has beaten you with a garland of flowers."<sup>3</sup> The similarity between these poems is clear despite minor differences.

### *Paḷḷu and Other Genres*

When minor literary works like *paḷḷu* and *kuṛavañci* became popular in the Tamil country, Sri Lankan poets also tried to compose similar works. In the eighteenth century Cinnatampip Pulavar wrote a play based on the *paḷḷu* genre. Though *paḷḷu* verses are similar to folk songs, this particular work excels as a praiseworthy literary work, known as the *Nallaikkuravañci*.

Another poet, Muttukkumāarakavirāyar composed many devotional and philosophical poems. He distinguished himself in composing verses in the *viruttam* metre. One can see the style of Mānik-kavācakar and Tāyumāṇavar in Kavirāyar's verses.

### *Ārumuka Nāvalar (A.D. 1822–1889)*

Ārumuka Nāvalar occupies the pride of place among the Tamil scholars of Yālppāṇam. He also spent some years in Madras, rendering yeoman service to Tamil language and literature. Being a devout Śaivite he was responsible for popularizing many Śaiva religious works like the *Periyapurāṇam*. As he was an able translator, he translated many works from Tamil into English and vice versa. He was responsible for improving the Tamil translation of the *Bible*. Besides establishing many Tamil schools, Nāvalar was instrumental in starting a printing press to bring out good quality Tamil textbooks. Tradition avers that he begged from door to door for the upkeep of the printing press. He was in fact the forerunner for printing Tamil textbooks without mistakes. He himself wrote textbooks in simple Tamil without any grammatical mistakes for primary school children. He wrote books explaining the tenets of Śaivism as well as guides to learn the Tamil grammar without tears.

Nāvalar was responsible for the prose versions of poetical religious works like the *Periyapurāṇam* and the *Tiruvilaiyāṭar Purāṇam*. He wrote commentary and meanings for literary as well as grammatical works like the *Naṇṇūl*. In the nineteenth century, when prose writings were becoming popular in Tamil, Nālvar set the pace by writing chaste, faultless and simple Tamil. Therefore, he could be considered the father of modern Tamil prose.

### *Tāmōtaram Pillai*

C.V. Tāmōtaram Pillai (A.D. 1832–1901) was the author of many prose works and poems. He was the first Arts graduate of the University of Madras. With his scholarship and research ability in English he contributed considerably to the growth of Tamil literature. His works, prose as well as poetry, are known for their brevity and depth of meaning. Although his works have sunk into oblivion, Pillai's services as the first editor and publisher of old manuscripts written on palm leaves are remembered by the Tamil-speaking world even today. Despite importance given to English and Pillai's eminent position as Judge, he regarded it his duty and proud privilege to render service to the Tamil language. He was the editor a Tamil journal *Utayatārakai*. He was also responsible for the preservation of many old literary works written in Tamil on palm leaves. Pillai was the first person of eminence to point out that unless they were preserved many important works would be lost to the Tamil world. Credit should also be given to him for raising the status of the Tamil language to that of a venerable mother in the eyes of the Tamils. The following passage from his writings indicate Pillai's devotion to Tamil language and literature.

It is difficult to obtain post *Caṅkam*-works. One after the other many interesting works have been destroyed by the passage of time. Oh gentlemen! don't you have any interest in preserving your literary heritage? We are unduly affected, when we see literary works in other languages destroyed. Is it not true that the Tamil language is our mother? It's indeed curious to be just looking on while she is being destroyed.

Pillai gave tremendous encouragement to the Tamil scholars like V.K. Cūriyanārāyaṇa Sastriyar for the progress of Tamil literature and language.

*Other Scholars*

Poet Kaṇakacapaippulavar (A.D. 1829–1873) of Yālappāṇam, a Christian by faith, was known for his ability to compose verses within a short time. In keeping with the old literary tradition, he wrote the *Tiruvākkuppurāṇam* and the *Aḷakiricāmi Maṭal*.

V. Kaṇakasapaip Pillai (A.D. 1855–1906) of Yālppāṇam lived in Tamil Nadu and wrote the famous work entitled, *The Tamils 1800 Years Ago* in English. A scholar in English, Pillai spent most of his time in research and writing research works. T.K. Kaṇakasapaip Pillai (A.D. 1863–1922) was yet another scholar, known for his service to Tamil language and literature. He translated Vālmīki's *Kishkindha Canto* and *Cuntara Canto* into Tamil. He also wrote a commentary on Kampan's *Pālakāṇṭam*.

N. Katiraivēl Pillai (A.D. 1844–1907), who was also from Yālppāṇam, came to Tamil Nadu and wrote many works including a commentary on *Naiṭtatam*. He also compiled a good Tamil dictionary. Besides, he wrote a *kalampakam* on the celebrated Subramaniya temple at Katirkāmam. Another scholar of the same name with a different initial, K. Katiraivēl Pillai (A.D. 1829–1904) also rendered yeomen service to Tamil language and literature.

Another Tamil scholar from Yālppāṇam, Civakcampupulavar (A.D. 1830–1909) wrote sixty poetical works. Among them, many belong to the *antāti* genre. All his works were modelled on medieval Tamil works. He wrote some commentaries as well.

Cuṇṇākam Kumārācāmiippulavar (A.D. 1854–1922) translated certain Sanskrit literary works like the *Cāṇakkiya Nīti Venpā*, *Mēkatūtak Kārikai* and *Irāmōtantam* into Tamil. The *Cicupālavatam* is also a translation of a Sanskrit prose work. He wrote commentaries as well as some poetical and prose works. The most important contribution to Tamil was his work entitled *History of Tamil Poets*.

*Vipulāṇantar*

Cuvāmi Vipulāṇantar, a sanyasi of the Ramakrishna Order, was a versatile scholar in many branches of knowledge such as literature, religion, philosophy, science and music. His scholarship in English helped his research in Tamil. One of his major works entitled *Yālnūl*, is an elaborate research work on yāl, one of the ancient Tamil musical instruments. He wrote many interesting

poems too. The three verses in a poem entitled '*Icaṇ Uvakkum Inmalarkaḷ Mūṇṇu*' (The Three Flowers which God Appreciates) reflect the author's high ideal. The poem, which is in the form of a conversation among girls points out the three flowers which God appreciates. "What flower does God want? Does he want any other flower, except the heart which resembles a lotus flower. Which is the appropriate flower to God? The appropriate flower is nothing but the praying hands which resemble the *Gloriosa superba*. Which flower does God like? The flower that He likes most, is the eyes, that look at Him with devotion, eyes that are similar to the water-lilies." Poems of this category are found in a clear and simple style.

White jasmine or any other flower  
Does suit the Lord's feet ?  
Neither white jasmine nor any other flower  
But only your lotus-like heart  
Does the Lord require  
Fully bloomed flowers or bunch of water-lilies  
Does suit the Lord who came like a bridegroom?  
Neither bloomed flowers or bunch of water-lilies  
But only your *kāntaḷ*\* like praying hands  
Does the Lord require.

Cassia flower or the heavenly Karpakam flower  
Does suit the Lord ?  
Neither the Cassia nor the Karpakam flower  
But only your *neytal*\* like eyes  
Does the Lord require.<sup>1</sup>

Since Vipulānantar was interested in the growth of Tamil drama, he collected all the dramatic and the dance conventions in the form of a book, entitled *Mataṅka Cūḷāmaṇi*.

### Plays

In Sri Lanka, the drama as a literary genre made rapid strides. In the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries many poets were engaged in writing plays. Arumuka Navalar's father, Kantappiḷḷai

\* *Kāntaḷ*: *Gloriosa superba*.

\* *Neytal*: *Nyamphae alba*.



alone wrote more than twenty plays, which included *Irāma Vilācam* and *Cantirakāram*. Navalar's teacher, Cēnātirāyar wrote the *Nal-laik Kuṟavañci* and other plays. These indicate the interest shown by the scholars of Sri Lanka in the art of writing plays. Some of the plays were based on the stories of the twin epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Inuvir Ciṇṇatampi's *Kōvalaṇ Nāṭakam* was based on the story of Kōvalaṇ and Kaṇṇaki. Many interesting songs form part of the plays. Occasional *kīrttaṇai* or musical compositions were also written. Nāvalar also composed many soul-stirring *kīrttaṇas*.

### *Polemical Works*

During the nineteenth century, works pertaining to religious disputations and polemics appeared and disappeared in Sri Lanka. Leading scholars like Ārumuka Nāvalar and Katiraivēl Pillai too wrote polemical works. Katiraivēl Pillai's work *Arutpā Anru Marutpā* (Not Divinely but Ignorance Inspired Poems) took exception to the claims of calling Irāmaliṅka Cuvāmikaḷ's poems as divinely inspired or *Arutpā*. One writer questioned the propriety of calling Śiva a god in a work entitled *Civaṇum Tēvaṇā*. Another writer launched a bitter attack against it by writing a book entitled *Civaṇum Tēvaṇā Enṇum Tīya Nāvukka Āppu* (A Bolt for the Profane Tongue that Questioned whether Śiva is a God). Polemical writings like the *Nāṇakkummi*, *Añṇaṇakkummi* and *Añṇāṇakkummi Maruppu* condemned one another's religious views. The Christians and the Śaivites holding opposite religious beliefs wrote many works of polemical nature. Although these works have disappeared from circulation, they undoubtedly helped to develop a vigorous prose style in Tamil in the nineteenth century.

### *Literary Works in Prose*

It can be seen even in Sri Lanka that Tamil prose developed only after the contact with Europeans. T.T. Caravaṇamuttup Pillai was the forerunner in the field of novel-writing and his *Mōkaṇāṅki* was the first work of its kind. After him, many writers to this day have been writing novels and short stories, bringing fame both to their country and to Tamil. Innumerable short stories have been written in Sri Lanka and many compete with short stories written in Tamil Nadu, in form and portrayal of emotions.



Sri Lanka never lagged behind in the art of writing novels in Tamil. The forerunners in this genre of writing were Caravanamuttup Pillai as already mentioned and C.V. Cinnappā Pillai who wrote *Viraciṅkaṇ Katai*. Another novelist V.T. Irācaraattiṇam wrote two novels, *Kolukompu* and *Turaikkāraṇ*. He also wrote many interesting short stories and they are found in a collection of short stories, entitled *Toni*.

While a group of writers in Tamil Nadu were engaged in contributing to the growth of short stories through the journal *Maṇikkoṭi*, another group of writers like Civapātacuntaram and Vaittiyaḷinkam were engaged in a similar mission in Sri Lanka. Nakulaṇ's short stories are found in two anthologies of short stories, *Kaṇṇippen* and *Ippaṭi Eṭṭaṇai Nāḷ*.

Katirkāmanātaṇ's *Koṭṭumpani* is a collection of short stories. Another two collections of short stories, *Taṇṇīrum Kaṇṇīrum* and *Pātukai* were written by Dominic Jiva. His short stories are known for their progressive ideas. Civaṇānacuntaram wrote many interesting short stories under the pseudonym Ilaṅkaiyarkōṇ. A collection of his short stories entitled *Vellippātaracam* contains very thought-provoking stories.

Kaṇaka Centinātaṇ wrote many short stories, novels and dramas. He has been throwing new light on literary criticism. His well-known collection of short stories is *Veṇcaṅku*.

Daniel wrote a novel entitled *Neṭuntūram* and many short stories.

S. Poṇṇutturai wrote more than two hundred short stories. One of his published collection of short stories is *Vī*. The central theme of this novel is the problem of sex. He has succeeded in the art of writing short stories by approaching them from a new angle. For example one of his short stories "Aṇi" is written entirely in a conversational style. The much discussed stream-of-consciousness has been diligently handled in some of his short stories like "Vilai". Since the writer believes in creating realism in his creations, Poṇṇutturai portrays the characters' speech, customs and manners, their psychology and perversions of sex without any inhibition. He never comes to the fore in his writings, but allows the characters to act their set role with great perspicuity. Like a great artist, who can draw a picture with a few strokes. Poṇṇutturai is able to portray the qualities of his characters in a few short sentences. He uses very skilfully Arabic words and certain idioms of the Christians in

stories pertaining to Muslim and Christian families respectively.

K.S. Makēcaṇ, following the methods of H.G. Wells, has written the first science fiction in Sri Lanka. The title of the novel is *Antarattīvu*.

There is some difference between the Tamil used in Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu. Certain words differ in their meanings between the two countries. The usage of finite verbs also differs. Considerable difference, therefore, exists between these two countries in the Tamil style as used in novels and short stories. There is marked difference especially in the spoken Tamil.

The stories in many of S. Kaṇēcaliṅkam's anthologies are known for their alluring charm, novelty and nimbleness. His novels highlight communist ideologies, portray class struggle—the struggle between labour and capital—and bring to the fore the despicable nature of present day living. Political ideology dominates his writings. A classic example is his novel *Cevvāṇam*. The hero of this novel is a labourer and the way politics shapes his struggle in life is grippingly portrayed. Another novel, *Niṇṭa Payaṇam* (Long Journey) depicts a prevailing social problem in the Tamil society of Sri Lanka. It gives a graphic description of the life led by scheduled caste people and the attitude of high caste people towards them. Although untouchability was invalidated in Indian society due to Gandhi's movement, the vile habit still exists among the Tamils of Sri Lanka, and this has provoked novelist Kaṇēcaliṅkam to write *Niṇṭa Payaṇam*. The revolting custom of untouchability has been practised in temples located in the midst of highly educated Tamils, who prevent the low caste people from entering them. With realism this cruelty is portrayed in the novel. The synopsis of the story is as follows: The hero Cellatturai, himself of a low caste origin, revolted against this social practice. This took the form of a struggle and the hero argued with the ritually pure caste people "whether our water also pollutes God?" For all his reasonings, he was replied with beatings. Though the wounds on his body were cured, they left an indelible mark on his heart. In the struggle to establish social equality, the law courts too supported the arrogant ritually pure castes. Cellatturai's struggle to establish an egalitarian society with social justice and birth rights assumed the form of a 'long journey' in the novel. Another novel *Caṭaṅku* (Rituals) shows the degradation of Tamil society in Sri Lanka owing to social ills and ignorant beliefs.

### Modern Poems

In the previous centuries though many traditional types of *purāṇas* and devotional songs had been composed, in this century new poetical forms have been experimented to give expression to people's thoughts and feelings. Poet Makākavi's anthology of poems' *Vaḷḷi*, belongs to this category. He also composed one hundred, five-line verses under the title *Kurumpā*. These poems are classical examples of scintillating wit, humour and sarcasm. There are poems which portray the emotions of lovers. Since Makākavi was interested in composing new types of verse forms, he wrote some poetical plays. The following poem is a good example of his wit. In this poem the poet gives an imaginative answer for the difficulty in obtaining visa to Sri Lanka. In Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇa* Rāvaṇa of Lanka was portrayed as a villain. Since the poet of Tamil Nadu portrayed Rāvaṇa as a malevolent character, the people of Sri Lanka are now reluctant to invite Kampan's compatriots.

Kampan composed an epic  
In it Rāvaṇa was denigrated  
To attend our country's celebration  
Organized by people like us  
In honour of Rāvaṇa  
None of the Tamils (of India)  
Will ever obtain visa.

Many imaginative poems have been composed by K. Vēntaṇar. New types of poems with new ideas were written by Cēlvarācaṇ under the pseudonym Tāntōṇtrik Kavirāyar. Besides composing poems, he also wrote new types of plays for the radio. Civāṇatam composed many verses on scientific subjects with a rare flight of imagination. In his anthology of poems entitled, *Kaṇṭariyātatu*, there are verses on dynamo, petromax-light, gramophone and centre of gravity, written in an appealing manner. These verses are in the form of a conversation among three characters, Kantaiya, Vaṭivēlu and Āccimuttu.

Poets of Sri Lanka have written many interesting verses for children. Vēntaṇar in one of his poems meant for children describes in a simple and moving manner the happiness of a mother who meets her young son half-way while returning from the school

and carries him on her shoulders. As if spoken by the boy, the joy of the doting mother is well depicted in simple words.

When the school was closed  
I was running home;  
Half way to my home  
Came my mother and  
Carried me on her shoulders.

Some other poets like Caccitānantam also composed imaginative and interesting poems.

### *Malaysia and Singapore*

Tamil immigrants have been living in Malaysia and Singapore for quite a long time. There are more than fifty to sixty writers in these two countries who are engaged in writing poems, stories, plays and essays in Tamil. They have been interesting themselves in the art of creative writing for the past thirty years for the love of it. They started writing not for financial gains, but essentially, for personal satisfaction and purely for giving expression to their creative urge. Since they have been living and working along with other racial groups such as the Malays and the Chinese in rubber estates, dreaming about their forefathers' homeland, Tamil Nadu, and trying hard to break the fetters of caste system, the Tamils have abundance of material to write interesting poems and stories. These writers deserve praise for their efforts to create literary works, despite being members of minority community. In contrast to the writers of Sri Lanka, those of Malaysia and Singapore adopted a style which is quite similar to Tamil Nadu. The main reason for the existence of dissimilarity in the first case and similarity in the second is due to lack of contact and close contact respectively with Tamil Nadu. The Tamils, who had settled down in various centres like Yālpānam, Maṭṭakkaḷappu and Tirukkōṇamalai in Sri Lanka several centuries ago spoke the Tamil language for generations having the least contact with Tamil Nadu. The Tamils living in Malaysia and Singapore on the other hand, were recent immigrants either in the nineteenth century or in the twentieth century and have been maintaining contact with Tamil Nadu owing to family connections and for reasons like education and business. Therefore the Tamil style of Malaysian and Singapore



writers does not differ from that of Tamil Nadu writers. Likewise the books and newspapers of these two countries are analogous to those of the Tamil country.

It can be taken for certain that literary growth in Tamil took place in Malaysia and Singapore largely after 1947. Up to this period about fifty persons contributed to the literary growth of Tamil. Many created interesting short stories, composed moving verses and wrote thought-provoking essays. Except in some cases, most of their contributions appeared in newspapers only but were never brought in book form.

### *Stories and Poems*

Many anthologies of Malaysian writer's short stories, verses and poems for children have appeared in recent years. Singapore Mukilan is noteworthy for his compositions of children's poems. Pariti's anthology entitled, the *Venṇilā* contains many good poems. Two other important poets, Cōmacaṇma and Neṭumāraṇ are also noted for their compositions of children's poems.

S. Kuṇacēkarar's collection of short stories, *Niṇaiviṇ Nilal*, gives pen portraits of some aspects of life of the Malaysian Tamils. M. Turaicami's collection of short stories, *Anpu Anṇai* is known for its skill in narration and easy flow of style.

Among the anthologies of Malaysian poems, Cuvāmi Rāmatācar's *Urimai Muḷakkam* contains many emotionally charged poems. In his anthology of poems, *Inpa Malaysia*, Maṛaimuṭi Vallattaracu pays a tribute to his country's beauty and wealth of nature. Other noteworthy collection of poems include R. Perumāl's *Pōrmuḷakkam* and *Malaysia Pēroḷi*. Some of the verses are in traditional metres. Others are in simple and easy modern style. In Ulakanātaṇ's collection of verses entitled *Cantaṇak Kiṇṇam* one can note abiding love for Tamil as well as his novelty in expressing different human emotions. A widow's suffering is brought out with deep emotion in one of the poems of this collection entitled *Kuppait Toṭṭi*. The following lines from the poem are in fact a diatribe against society.

If it is a legitimate child  
The cradle is its bed  
If it is an illegitimate one  
The dustbin, is its bed.



Another poem *Kēṭpatum Kiṭaiṭpattum* is known for its novelty of form as well as the manner in which the central theme is unfolded.

One of the best known collections of Malaysian short stories is *Aṇṇu Itayam*. It contains the short stories of some of the leading writers like Turai, Kumār, Irāmaiyā, Aṇṇāṇantaṇ, Cāppacāṇ, Vīrappaṇ, Nākumaṇāḷaṇ, Neṭumāraṇ, Kriṣṇacāmi, Vēlucāmi, Kamalanātaṇ, Iḷamvaḷuti, Vaṭivēl, Tiruvēṇkaṭam, Makēcuvari and others. Most of these writers are Tamil teachers, serving in the schools run by rubber estates. The themes of their stories are the Malaysian problems and they have drawn upon their own experiences in life there. One of the stories titled *Kuraṇku Aṇṇup Palaṇ* portrays the Chinese beliefs, customs and manners with remarkable accuracy. To give realism to this story Chinese words and phrases appear in appropriate places. In some stories Malay words and phrases also occur, for they have become part of the Tamil idiom. Many of the short stories in this collection have excellent literary form and are good examples of Tamil short stories. One story entitled *Kaḷuvāy* portrays the pitiable conditions of a person given over to a sensual life. To satisfy his lust he ran after women. One day, finally, he was swayed by the beauty of his own three daughters. He ended up sitting statuesque and shedding tears for his appalling sexual crimes. One other story delineates the absence of unity among the Tamils living in rubber estates.

Some novelettes like the *Cemmaṇṇum Nīlamalarkaḷum*, *Nāṇ Or Intup Peṇ* and *Neñcē Nī Vālka* are written with a new approach.

Muracu Neṭumāraṇ and Velucāmi have brought out two anthologies of interesting poems known as *Iḷantaḷir* and *Kavitaip Pittaṇ Kavitaikaḷ* respectively.

Muruku Cuppiramaṇiyam has distinguished himself as an editor of monthly and daily newspapers. He has brought out some collection of essays dealing with his travels around Southeast Asian countries.

With the contribution of many devoted writers, the Malaysian Tamil literature has started to make strides gradually, with a clear aim.

## NOTES

1. Aruḷ Celvanāyakam (ed.,) *Vipulāṇantattēṇ* (Madras, 1956), p. 1.

## Plays

From time immemorial the Tamil country has witnessed the existence of theatres, plays and troupes of actors. In the *Caṅkam* literature there is enough evidence to prove the popularity of musicians like *pāṇars*, dancers like *viṇaliyar*, *kūttar* and *porunar* and their contribution to the art of drama. Further, the importance given to music and dance during this period accounts for the plays being liked and admired in the ancient Tamil country. The *Tolkāppiyam*, for example, discusses the conventions of theatre or stage while discussing the eight emotions or *rasas*. Since they originate on the stage they could be understood only by persons of keen sensitiveness and not by others. All these are explained under the section “meyppāṭṭiyal” in *Tolkāppiyam*. A study of “meyppāṭṭiyal” obviously reveals that the author explained all the literary emotions from the standpoint of dramatic art. In olden days dramas flourished along with dance. Since both these arts are similar in many respects very little is said separately about the art of dance in grammatical works like the *Tolkāppiyam*. However there are many references to different types of dances and folk dances based on stories in epics like the *Cilappatikāram* and the *Maṇimēkalai*. References in grammatical works and epics reveal the existence of many dramas in the Tamil country. The large amount of care that had been bestowed by scholars on preserving poems was not given to the earliest dramas. As a result a large body of ancient poetic literature known as the *Caṅkam* classics is available. But

not a single collection of ancient plays exists now. The commoners who had witnessed and enjoyed dramas never took pains to preserve them for posterity.

In ancient days dramas were classified into two categories, *vēttiyaḷ* and *potuviyaḷ*. The former was meant exclusively for the enjoyment of kings, while the latter for the commoners.

It was only in the medieval period that Tamil works were classified into three special categories, namely *iyaḷ* (prose), *icai* (poetry) and *nāṭakam* (drama). As a result of the classification the Tamil language acquired the name *muttamiḷ*, or three types of Tamil, viz. prose, poetry and drama. The commentator of the grammatical work, *Iraiyaṇār Kaḷaviyaḷ*, has mentioned the titles of some plays. A few among them explain the dramatic conventions and rules. Aṭiyārkkunallār, in his commentary on the *Cilappatikāram*, mentions the names of some grammatical works pertaining to plays like *Cayantam*, *Ceyirriyam*, *Muruval*, *Mativāṇar Nāṭakat Tamiḷnūḷ*, *Vilakkattār Kūttu*, *Ceyanmurai*, *Kuṇanūḷ* and *Kūttanūḷ*. Among them the *Kūttanūḷ* has been published recently, which besides giving rules and conventions for dance and drama, offers a wealth of information regarding the existence of theatres, their conventions, the types of plays enacted as well as the popularity of actors. The work further speaks about the lighting arrangements for the stage. It was arranged in such way that no shadow would fall on the stage while the play was in progress. The *Cilappatikāram* mentions about three types of screens, such as *orumuka eḷiṇi*, *porumuka eḷiṇi* and *karantuvaral eḷiṇi*. The screen called *orumuka eḷiṇi* comes from one end to another and covers the entire stage. The second type, *porumuka eḷiṇi* comes from both ends of the stage and meets at the centre; thus covering the entire stage. The third type, *Karantuvaral eḷiṇi*, which is folded at the top of the stage will roll down and cover the stage in full.

After the *Caṅkam* period, like other fine arts the drama was also patronised and staged mainly within the precincts of temples. Staging dramas was one of the attractions during temple festivals. Both the Pallava and the Cōḷa monarchs were patrons of dramas. They also gave liberal grants for the maintenance of actors. The stone inscriptions at Bṛhadiśvara temple in Tanjavur attests to the generous contribution made by a Cōḷa monarch to a company of actors. Further it is learnt that on the *Vaikāci* festival days, a troupe of actors headed by one Ācārya Vijayarājendra staged a drama

entitled *Rājarājesware Nāṭakam*. The drama was based on some of the historical events that had taken place during the period of the greatest Cōla emperor Rājarāja I (A.D. 985–1014). References regarding the dramas, the leader of the dramatic troupe, his title Tiruvāḷaṇ and the endowments given to the troupe are found in the stone inscriptions of Tiruvāliśvaram and Tirukkallukkuṇṇam temples. Even when Tanjavur came under the suzerainty of Maharāshtra rulers in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, dramas were enacted in temples. After this period folklore plays like the *Kuṛavañci* became famous. In folklore plays Kuṛatti, the woman of montane region, plays the dominant role of a soothsayer. Among the folklore plays, *Carapēntira Pūpālak Kuṛavañci Nāṭakam* and others are even now available. Another folklore play, the *paḷḷu* portrays the life of a farmer. Both the *paḷḷu* and *kuṛavañci* are in verse form.

Among the poetic plays that were written in the eighteenth century, Aruṇācalak Kavirāyar's *Irāmanāṭakam* and Kōpālākīruṣṇa Pāratiyār's *Nantaṇār Carittiram* are worthy of mention. Some of the plays like *noṇṇināṭakams* depict the miserable life of a person given to sensual pleasures. A few plays of this type became popular during the eighteenth century.

Only for the past few generations women have been participating in stage plays. Before that only men played the role of women characters. Women were reluctant to act with men, and society too detested women's participation in dramas. However it is really astonishing to learn from one of the inscriptions found at Paṭṭamaṭai temple that a lady by name Uyyavantāl had headed a dramatic troupe and staged dramas centuries ago.

### *Paḷḷu Plays*

Since farming has always been the major occupation of the people innumerable peasant songs should have been in existence in the Tamil country. However no peasant songs exist in Iḷankō's *Cilappatikāram*, although many folk songs similar to that of āyar (shepherds), vēṭṭuvar (hunters), kuṛavars (gypsies) and paratavar (fishermen) are found. There is no clear information even in the later period regarding the form or theme of peasant songs. Only during the last three centuries some poets have attempted to explain the folk songs of the farmers. The *Mōkaṇap Paḷḷu*, the first work of



this genre, was written in the seventeenth century. The term *paḷ* refers both to the low lying wet lands and cultivation. Therefore the term *paḷḷu* refers to folk songs of the farmers. Only a few verses of *Mōkanap Paḷḷu* are now available. These verses, written as musical compositions, describe the flood in the Kaveri, the various types of cattle used in farming, sowing and weeding.

The *Mukkūṭar Paḷḷu* is the most famous among the available *paḷḷu* works. Its author was a Vaiṣṇava poet, who lived in the eighteenth century. The story of a farmer is narrated in the form of a play. A *paḷḷan* or agricultural labourer was working in the farm of a large landlord known as *paṇṇaiyār*. The *paḷḷan* had two wives but spent most of his time in the company of his younger wife. This provoked the first wife into complaining to the landlord that her husband spent most of his time in the company of the second wife to the detriment of his farm work. *Paṇṇaiyār* called the *paḷḷan* and warned him not to neglect his duties. Thereupon the *paḷḷan* concentrated on his work. However his love for his second wife was so overpowering that he once again ignored his normal duties. This was again brought to the notice of the landlord by the first wife. The *paḷḷan* was tied to a post in the cattle-shed as a punishment. The jealous first wife was moved by his sufferings. She herself appealed to the landlord for her husband's release. Soon after his release, he conscientiously attended to his work. While at work, a cattle pushed and stamped him. He was bedridden for sometime. After recovery, he went back to work and harvested the paddy. He was given his share of rice, which he shared with his two wives. The first wife complained to her neighbours that she was not given her due share. The second wife could not brook this. She picked a quarrel with the first wife and rebuked her for her irresponsible behaviour. Thereafter sanity prevailed and peace was restored. Finally both the wives jointly praised the *paḷḷan*. This is the synopsis of the story narrated in *Mukkūṭar Paḷḷu*. Even other *paḷḷus* also narrate similar type of stories.

In the seventeenth century there existed a lot of religious rivalry and animosity between the Śaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites. This was vividly portrayed through the characters, mainly through the *paḷḷa's* wives. One of the wives would be a Śaiva and the other a Vaiṣṇava. During their quarrels, both Śiva and Viṣṇu would be the target of attack. The Śaivaite wife would run Viṣṇu down and the Vaiṣṇavite wife would criticize Śiva. Since the *Mukkūṭar*



*Paḷḷu* was written by a Vaiṣṇava poet, importance was given to Vaiṣṇavism. *Purāṇic* stories based on the Śiva and the Vaiṣṇava mythology are found in the *paḷḷu* poems.

Two types of verses, the *cintu* and the *kalippu* were used in the *Mukkūṭar Paḷḷu*. The former type of verses was commonly used in folk songs and the latter in literature. The whole story was developed through the characters' own words and the author stayed in the background. Since it is a folk drama, most of the incidents narrated in the work illustrate the life in villages. The inundation of river, the types of cattle, varieties of seeds, planting and harvesting, the peasant customs and habits, and their style of conversation are described in the work. The later *paḷḷu* works are, however, written in *akaval* and *venpā* metres which are suitable to literary works. The style is also literary, devoid of colloquial expressions. Therefore these new *paḷḷu* works lack realism. Besides these, other types of *paḷḷus* were composed either to praise a particular town or a rich man or to cater for the local people. In this respect these *paḷḷus* resemble the *talapurāṇas*. To highlight the greatness of certain shrines, *paḷḷu* works were also composed. Among them the *Paralai Vināyakar Paḷḷu*, the *Katirāimalaip Paḷḷu* and the *Kurukūrp Paḷḷu* are worth mentioning. Aruṇācalak Kavirāyar, the author of *Irāma Nāṭakam*, also composed the *Cīkālīp Paḷḷu* in honour of the shrines at Cīkālī. Only five verses of this work are now available. As regards the *paḷḷus* only forty are now available, apart from those that were lost owing to the ravages of time.

At a later date poet Eṇṇayiṇār gave the dramatized version of the *Mukkūṭar Paḷḷu*, and it is known as the *Mukkūṭar Paḷḷu Nāṭakam*. It was meant for the stage and therefore certain modifications were made even in the narration of the story to hold the interest of the audience. With this end in view a new character was also introduced in the dramatised version of the *Mukkūṭar Paḷḷu*.

### *Kuravañci*

Play written in verse form is known as *Kuravañci*. The term *kuravañci* refers to a woman born in a *kuravar* (gypsy) family. In *Kuravañci* dramas, the *kuratti* woman plays an important role as a soothsayer. The main theme in these dramas is human love. The story of the play goes as follows: the heroine, a lady of youth and beauty, falls in love with the hero while he goes in procession

through the main roads of the city. Thereafter she pines for his love. When her maid enquires as to the cause of her distress, she tells everything and then sends her to the hero to acquaint him with her love. On her way to the hero's place, the maid happens to meet a gypsy woman and brings her along to the heroine to have her palm read. The gypsy before forecasting sings of the scenic beauty and fertility of the hill country. then she reads the heroine's palm carefully and predicts the happy consummation of her love affair with the hero. For this prediction, the gypsy is rewarded with jewellery and gifts of various kinds. She returns to her abode wearing the ornaments. On her way home, she meets her husband who is engaged in catching birds, and narrates how she obtained her new ornaments. Thus, the play ends on a happy note.

The gripping interest in the play is maintained by the very composition of the play itself. Apart from the theme, the rich metrical variations heighten the interest in the play. In between scenes a jester appears to announce the arrival and importance of the *dramatis personae* to the audience. The entire story of the drama is narrated in verses.

*Tirukkurrālak Kuravañci* is highly appreciated among the *kuravañci* genre of works. With a similar theme, Kumarakuruparar has composed the *Mīṇāṭci Ammai Kuram*, although it is not a play. But Civakkoluntu Tēcikar's *Carapēntirapūpālak Kuravañci* is composed in the form of a play. There are many other works of this type such as *Kumpēcar Kuravañci Nāṭakam*, *Arttanārīcuvark Kuravañci* and *Tiruvārūrṅ Kuravañci*.

Even today the renowned *Tirukkurrālak Kuravañci* is staged both as a play and read as piece a of interesting literature. Its author Tirukūṭarācappak Kavirāyar lived in the eighteenth century. His master-piece, the *Kuravañci*, besides highlighting the scenic beauty of Kurrālam, a city in the far south of Tamil Nadu, sings the praise of Śiva, the presiding deity at the Kurrālam shrine. The central theme of the work is divine love. In honour of the Kurrālam Śaiva shrine, Tirukūṭarācappar has composed *talapurāṇam*, *mālai*, *cilētai veṇpā*, *yamaka antāti*, *ulā*, *ūṭal*, *piḷḷaittamil*. However the *Kuravañci* is the only work that is read with great interest now. The verses can be set to music and sung. It has all the features of a play. The gypsy woman's praise of the scenic beauty and fertility

of the hilly region has been graphically brought out in the following poem:

Vāṇaraṅkaḷ kaṇikoṭuttu mantiyoṭu koṇcum  
 Manticiṇtu kaṇikaḷukku vāṅkavikaḷ keṇcum  
 Kānavarkal viḷi erinti vānavarai aḷaipār  
 Kavanacittar vantuvantu kāyacitti viḷaiṇṇar  
 Tēṇaruvi tiraieḷumpi vāṇinuvaḷi oḷukum  
 Ceṇkatirōṇ terkkālum parikkālum vaḷukum  
 Kūṇal iḷam piṇaimuṭitta veṇialaṅ kārār  
 Kuṇṇālat tirukūṭa malaieṇkaḷ malaiye

Vicuvanāta Sastriyar of Yāḷppāṇam wrote the *Vaṇṇakkura-vaṇci* and the *Nakulamalaik Kuravaṇci* in the nineteenth century. He was an excellent composer of *cilētai* (pun) verses.

### *Nonṭi Nāṭakam*

In the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries many satirical and humorous plays were written. In them the objects of laughter or fun could be neither the deity nor the rich. Only the moral wrecks among the poor could be made fun of. The *nonṭi nāṭakams* in general portrays the life of a debauchee, one who had spent his life in the company of prostitutes and had become lame due to disease. The *Cītaṅkāti Nonṭi Nāṭakam*, for example, describes the transformed life of a lame robber, who had led a lewd life and later gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca and returned fully cured of his lameness. The play was written in *cintu* metre, known as the *Nonṭic Cintu* portraying the real life of a robber who lived during the period of the well-known philanthropist Cītaṅkāi. In the eighteenth century Mārimuttup Pulavar attained fame by composing the *Tirukkaccūr Nonṭi Nāṭakam*. Among the *nonṭi nāṭakams* that were written during that period, the *Aiyaṇār Nonṭi Nāṭakam* was praised by many.

### *Irāma Nāṭakam*

Aruṇācalak Kavirāyar (A.D. 1712–1779) wrote a *purāṇam* and *Kōvai* on the shrine at Cīkāḷi. Since he had great admiration for the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Kavirāyar composed some works based on the characters of the *Rāmāyaṇa* like the *Piḷḷaittamiḷ* on Hanumān. Besides he wrote a play based on the story of Acōmuki. It was the musical play *Irāma Nāṭakam* that brought him everlasting

fame. It is in fact a musical composition written in *Kīrttanas* and in a colloquial language meant to be enjoyed by the common people. The two pre-requisites, imagination and captivating rhythm are found in the play.

### *Plays Out of Vogue*

Mārimuttup Pillai's *Anīti Nāṭakam* was an important play of the eighteenth century. The play portrays the cruelty of the Carnatic Nawab's administrators and the Governor Khan Sahib's fair-mindedness.

In the nineteenth century Kāci Vicuvanāta Mudaliar wrote many interesting plays including *Ṭampāccāri Nāṭakam*, *Tāciltār Nāṭakam* and *Piramma Camāja Nāṭakam* (1871). These showed the way for the future growth of plays in Tamil. Appāvuppiḷai's *Ariccantira Vilācam* is yet another famous play of this period.

Irāmaccantirak Kavirāyar's *Cakuntalai Vilācam*, *Tāruka Vilācam* and *Pārata Vilācam* were based on purāṇic stories. They were known for their humour. Kavirāyar composed many poems of *cittarakkavi* types. Paracurāmak Kavirāyar's *Ciruttoṇṭar Vilācam* was based on the life of one of the sixty-three Saiva saints. All these plays merely indicate the interest the poets had in those days in composing plays.

Of the plays that were written on palm leaves in the nineteenth century many have got lost. About one hundred plays were printed but only a few are in existence now.

Most of the plays that were written in the nineteenth century were based on *purāṇic* stories. Many of them still remain on palm leaves, without any attempt being made to print them. Some plays like *Iraṇiya Cammāra Nāṭakam*, *Uttara Rāmāyaṇa Nāṭakam*, *Mārkkantēya Nāṭakam* and the plays based on *Periya-purāṇam* captivated the minds of the people who lived in the last century.

Verses and songs dominated the plays that were written prior to the twentieth century. In these plays prose appears in between the verses songs. All plays begin with two-line verses of invocations to God. Then appears *kaṭṭiyakkānraṇ*'s speech. There is a distinct difference between the *kaṭṭiyakkāraṇ* who appears in Tamil plays and the *cūttiratāraṇ* in Sanskrit plays. The former appears whenever the scenes change in the play, whereas the latter appears



at the beginning of the play only. Since plays of this period were divided into acts and scenes, the *kaṭṭiyakkāraṇ* was employed to indicate the change of act or scene. He also took the role of introducing the characters as well as expatiating upon their qualities at the beginning of each act to the audience. His introduction would be on the following lines: "Look at the manner in which the monarch Ariccantira is coming to occupy his throne." "See the way in which Kōvalaṇ is returning to Mātavi." These plays end with *taru*, a poem known for its special rhythm. The *paratvākkiyam*, which appear towards the end in Sanskrit plays, is not found in Tamil plays.

### Street Dramas

For the past few centuries street dramas have been popular largely among village folks. As the name indicates, street dramas are not staged inside a theatre but on temporary stages erected at street corners. They were staged mainly for the diversion of the rural folk. Even the actors were very little educated. These plays were written both in prose and poetry. Usually the street dramas would start after dinner in the night and end in the small hours of the morning. The *kaṭṭiyakkāraṇ* plays an equally important role in street dramas. He appears at the beginning of each act or scene and introduces the characters to the audience. His speeches and songs enable the audience to understand the play clearly. The actors used to be men in earlier time even the roles of women were enacted by men. Since there is no proper stage, a raised platform is invariably erected for the actors to stage the drama. A long piece of white cloth is held as a screen before the arrival of actors. Once they come up on the stage the cloth is removed, and then the actors stage the drama. They go round the stage singing and dancing. The background musician also joins them and the chorus singing can be distinctly heard even by the person who sits at the farthest end. In between scenes the jester appears to crack jokes and to sustain the interest of the audience in the play. Both the jester and the *kaṭṭiyakkāraṇ* would change their dialogue according to the place where the drama is acted or according to the needs of the situation. These street dramas provide ample opportunity for those who possess histrionic talents in them. Likewise those who have creative ability compose verses and dialogues for these dramas. Some of the street dramas reveal the



creative talents of the villagers. However due to want of good education, some of the dramas lack refinement and sophistication. However street dramas have served as a useful pastime for village folks. Innumerable such dramas have appeared and disappeared at that period of time.

### *New Techniques*

When the dramatic companies from Mahārāshtra came and staged dramas in Tamil Nadu, new techniques were introduced in Tamil dramas. In the new dramas dialogues increased at the expense of songs and there was more realism in their acting.

The Cukunāvilāca Sabha, which was inaugurated in 1891, and other amateur sabhas adopted new techniques and helped the growth of Tamil dramas. Men of learning, graduates, and some lawyers were involved in the activities or dramatic societies. In their hands the Tamil drama gained dignity. Henceforth the drama was enacted within three or four hours. Importance was given to acting and dialogue. Songs were reduced to the absolute minimum. As a result the Tamil drama came to be regarded as a fine art like music. Judges like Pammal Campanta Mudaliar were responsible for modernizing it. Mudaliar wrote many plays and in some of them he himself acted. The Cukunāvilāca Sabha, which was started by him, was the centre of dramatic activity. It attracted many lawyers to its fold and they by their skilful acting improved the stature of Tamil drama. Some among them carefully read Shakespeare's plays and adopted his techniques in writing the plays in Tamil. Thereafter the structure of Tamil plays changed, with parts divided into acts and scenes.

### *Maṇōṇmaṇīyam*

*Maṇōṇmaṇīyam* is the only poetical play which is being read till today as a piece of great literary work. Its author P. Cuntaram Pillai (A.D. 1855–1897) was a professor of Philosophy and scholar in Tamil. He was the first scholar to realise the absence of literary plays in Tamil and came forward to write one. The result of his efforts was the *Maṇōṇmaṇīyam*. Though it is in fact based on Lord Lytton's *The Secret Way*, it resembles a drama. Pillai borrowed only the theme from *The Secret Way* and the rest were all his own creation. The invocation to God, which appears at the beginning

of the play, reveals the author's love for his mother tongue and his country. The poem is regarded by students and scholars as a soul stirring one in praise of the Tamil language. In the course of the play Pillai portrays the greatness of the Tamil country and its cultural heritage. Some of the old Tamil proverbs are skilfully used in the dialogues. The ideas found in the *Tirukkural* and other important Tamil works are employed effectively. The Pāṇḍya king's oration to his soldiers on the eve of the battle in the play, is charged with emotion. His words inflame patriotic feelings of the readers. The following address is a classic example for its power to enkindle patriotism in the minds of readers. "The gods do not delight so much in the ritual fire lighted by Brahmans as by the patriotic fire kindled in the hearts of the people. The wound that is received at the battlefield is nothing but the wound of fame. It is not a wound but the 'eye' of fame." Pillai introduced scenes to show his scholarship in Vedānta and Siddhānta metaphysics. However discussion on these two philosophical systems found in the conversation between the two disciples of Cuntaramuṇivar seems to be out of context in the play. Likewise the maid Vāṇi's display of the *yāl* music narrates the history of Cīvakāmi and resembles more an independent story than music within the play.

The story of the play is as under. Maṇōṇmaṇi was the only daughter of the Pāṇḍya king Cīvakan. Kuṭilaṇ was his treacherous minister and Cuntaramuṇivar his noble family guru. The neighbouring Cēra king, Puruṭōttamaṇ, desired to marry Maṇōṇmaṇi. Cuntaramuṇivar was interested in the marriage because of his concern for the security of the Pāṇḍya kingdom. However no immediate steps could be taken to bring about the marriage, for there was a border dispute between the Cēra and the Pāṇḍya kingdoms. Meanwhile Kuṭilaṇ carefully planned to get his son married to Maṇōṇmaṇi and thereafter to usurp the Pāṇḍya kingdom and become its king. As a first step, Kuṭilaṇ exploited the border trouble which culminated in an armed conflict between the two kingdoms. While Cīvakan was on the verge of defeat at the battlefield, he had to accept the marriage proposal of his wicked minister. Seeing her father's predicament, Maṇōṇmaṇi agrees to marry the minister's son. The marriage was fixed for the midnight. At the appointed hour Kuṭilaṇ's son was ready to garland her. Unexpectedly Puruṭōttamaṇ appeared there to the astonishment of everyone with Kuṭilaṇ hand-cuffed. Immediately Maṇōṇmaṇi

garlanded the Cēra king and felt happy that she could marry the lover of her choice.

In this play, Vāṇi and her lover Naṭarājaṇ are portrayed as noble characters. These two characters are the mouthpieces of the author, expressing many great truths.

Cuntaram Pillai's speeches on philosophy have come out in the form of a book entitled, *Nūrrokai Viḷakkam*. He was the first scholar to write the history of Tamil literature.

### *Caṅkaratās Cuvāmikaḷ*

In the early part of the twentieth century, Caṅkaratās Cuvāmikaḷ wrote many plays and travelled all over the Tamil country to train people in the art of performing a play. Those who were trained by him, are now famous in the dramatic field. Most of the Caṅkaratās' plays were based on *purāṇic* stories and they conveyed specific ethical principles. According to the custom of that period the plays were written in verse intermingled with prose. The summary of a verse would be repeated in prose. Verses were written conforming to the established grammatical rules. Prose passages abounded in long-wound sentences. Unless the actors were competent to learn and memorize both the poetic and prose passages they could not repeat them on the stage and act. It can be said with certainty that most of the present day actors would find this a difficult task to perform.

Caṅkartās utilised dramas with Bhakti and Purāṇic themes as instruments to ennoble the minds of the people. *Pirakalātaṇ* and *Ciruttonṭar* belonged to the category of Bhakti plays whereas the *Pavalakkoṭi* and the *Lavakucā* were *purāṇic* plays. He distinguished himself as a great playwright of skill and speed by writing in one night the Apimaṇyu drama, which contained more than one hundred poems. Though he had written forty plays, he never liked to get them into cold print. It was after his death that some of the plays like *Apimaṇyucuntari*, *Caticulōcaṇā* and *Caṭiāṇacūyā* were published.

Caṅkaratās' plays were written following the traditional stage conventions of the day. His plays were meant to propagate the old values and morals. Most of his plays harped on themes like chastity of women and the greatness of Bhakti. Ideas from ethical works like *Tirukkuraḷ* and *Nālaṭiyār* were liberally used in his plays.



### *Ilaṭcumaṇa Pillai*

Ilaṭcumaṇa Pillai was a scholar in music. He wrote the plays *Viḷā Nāṭakam* and *Ravivarmā*. *Ceyyut Kōvai* is a collection of his poems.

### *Campanta Mudaliar*

Pammal Campanta Mudaliar (1873–1964) worked for the advancement and progress of the Tamil drama for about half a century, and brought it to a position of respectability. He inaugurated the first dramatic society, Cukunāvilāca Sabha, in Madras city in 1891. It was then a hub of dramatic activity in the city. Many plays were staged in its premises. Most of the plays were written and directed by him. He encouraged many lawyers and other professionals to act in plays and to participate in the activities of the Sabha. Many considered it as a rare privilege to act in the dramas directed by Mudaliar. He wrote and staged the first social drama, *Puṣpavalli* in 1893. After this he wrote ninety original plays and translated several others from English and Sanskrit literatures into Tamil. None except Mudaliar in the Tamil world did such yeoman service in the field of Tamil drama. Some of his major plays like *Iratnāvaḷi*, *Manōkarā*, *Iraṇṭu Naṇparkaḷ*, *Kaḷvar Talaivaṇ* and *Vētāḷa Ulakam* reveal his ability as a creative writer of plays. In scintillating wit and humour the play, *Capapati*, is unrivalled. Mudaliar translated William Shakespeare's plays like *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It* and *Cymbeline* into Tamil. Besides these, Sanskrit plays like *Vikramōrvaciyam*, *Cākuntalam* and *Mālavikāgnimitram* were translated by Campanta Mudaliar. His interest, experience and competence in the field of Tamil drama are clearly revealed in his own works like *Nāṭakat Tamil* (Tamil Drama), *Nāṭakamētai Niṇaivukaḷ* (Reminiscences of Dramatic Stage) and *Nāṭakak Kalaiyil Tērciperuvatu Eppaṭi?* (How to Gain Expertise in the Dramatic Art?).

In contrast to Caṅkaratās Cuvāmikaḷ, Campanta Mudaliar followed western tradition and wrote all his plays in prose. All the dialogues were in prose and songs were used as background music. The dialogues were straightforward and simple without alliterations and assonances.

### *Cūriyanārāyaṇar and Others*

In the beginning of this century Cūriyanārāyaṇa Sastiriyar, a pro-

fessor of Tamil in one of the colleges in Madras city, evinced great interest in the advancement of Tamil drama. His *Nāṭaka Iyal* (Rules of drama) defines the basic concepts of Tamil drama. He himself wrote some original plays like *Kalāvati*, *Rūpāvati* and *Māṇavijayam*. But they could neither be put on the stage nor read with interest. Since it was written in archaic Tamil, they lack the vigour of a drama. Nevertheless Sastriyar's interest in Tamil drama and his ardour for the advancement of Tamil are worthy of praise.

Maṛaimalai Aṭikaḷ translated the Sanskrit drama *Śakuntalā* into Tamil. As a literary play it is readable but not enactable. It is in fact a closet play. He also wrote an original play bringing out the life of Ampikāpati, the son of poet Kampar.

Many plays were translated from the European languages into Tamil. Some among them were also staged. Certain Tamil writers wrote plays based on the stories of western plays, instead of translating them. Though such plays were put on the stage, they did not make readable literary plays.

### *A Riddle*

Plays intended for acting are written in colloquial style in order to appeal to the common man. Since they are in the idiom of the common man, educated people do not like to read them or encourage others to buy and read them. As a result they do not have the opportunity to exist as literary works. If the plays are written in a literary style with appeal for the educated, they lack imagination and verve. Since the style is artificial and contrary to the spoken Tamil of the people, the plays lack realism and the very purpose for which the plays are written is defeated. As a result only the educated appreciate them and not the others. Even the educated consider it more interesting to read essays and stories than plays. Essays and stories, as a matter of fact, convey the events and the ideas in an easy and straightforward manner. Skill and imagination are needed to understand the inner meaning of a play for it contains only dialogues. No such effort is needed to understand essays and stories. Therefore, plays which are meant for acting are unfit for reading and vice versa. Because of these reasons, even though there are many theatrical troupes, famous actors and innumerable theatres, there are only a few literary plays. Therefore some criticise that Tamil has not progressed in the field of drama.

The scarcity of dramas in Tamil is not a peculiar feature of



the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. This drawback has been noticeable throughout the period of Tamil literature. Literary works like the *Āṟṟuppaṭai* and inscriptions support the existence of actors in the *Caṅkam* and the medieval periods. The kings patronized these actors. The temple *maṇḍapās* were used for performing dramas. No temple festival was held without them. Though dramas had held an important place in the people's life, no drama of the earlier period, worth the name of literature, is available now. It does not mean that no plays existed in the country. They were there, but the poets did not applaud or preserve them as much as they did for the *Caṅkam* classics or the epics of medieval age. Therefore the plays disappeared in course of time. There are, however, some valid reasons for neglecting plays in Tamil, unlike other regional languages in the south. Since the Tamil language attained literary stature at a very early stage, it acquired certain rigid literary convention. It was stipulated that works of literary merit should be written in chaste style devoid of regionalism and colloquialisms. But plays meant for acting were written in spoken but not in literary Tamil. Hence the plays in spoken language were detested by poets and scholars. Talented writers themselves gave up writing plays. Even those that were written and staged were not given literary stature. Eminent poets like Kapilar and Nakkīrar in the *Caṅkam* period and Kampar and others in the medieval period would have witnessed many plays but none among them came forward to write plays. Instead they neglected the field of drama altogether. Therefore the plays that had been in existence in ancient and medieval periods were confined to the stage and later disappeared without leaving any trace behind.

Even if we analyse the plays of Campanta Mudaliar, it will be clear that they were meant largely for acting and not for reading. He was himself a good actor and acted in many dramas. His rich experience as a playwright and as an actor, enabled him to write plays pregnant with emotion and imagination. He gained success in presenting them on the stage. He could be compared to Shakespeare in some respects if we analyse his services to Tamil drama. Despite these services, his plays are not regarded as literary works. They are, in fact, in the process of being forgotten.

None wrote as many plays as Campanta Mudaliar did. However there were writers who wrote from three to fifteen plays. The extant plays do not support the claim that drama as a literary genre

has not been developed in Tamil. Perhaps it is appropriate to say that the mentality of the Tamils is such that they do not preserve the available plays as they do works of other genres.

### *Changes*

The dramatic field enjoyed a low prestige among the public before the advent of Caṅkaratās Cuvāmikaḷ and Pammal Campanta Mudaliar. The educated never ventured into this field because they considered it beneath their dignity. It was a taboo for family women and children to witness dramas. It was the duty of the parents to protect their children from even going anywhere near a theatre. When there was so much fear and ban even to witness plays one can imagine the reluctance to read, write and enact them. Since it was a forbidden field for scholars and men of virtue, many defects crept into the field of drama. Even while dramatizing an epic story like the *Cilappatikāram*, the story was changed to suit their fancy and the names of characters were corrupted to read as Kōvilan, Kaṇṇaki and Mātaki instead of the original names Kōvalan, Kaṇṇaki and Matavi respectively. Likewise unnecessary alteration were made in the stories of the epics too. Whenever stories from the *Mahābhārata* were narrated to a village audience, the entire village would go gay, as in a festival season. On such occasions, dramas based on the *Mahābhārata* stories were staged. But even those dramas were not free from such distortions.

In the earlier days many changes were introduced in dramas largely through ignorance and for the purpose of attracting the audience. In the present times alterations are made in dramas to incorporate the new techniques employed in the cinema field. As a result many innovations are made on the stage. To suit these changes, many alterations are made in the play. This is a new type of defect in modern plays.

### *The Modern Dramas*

Kantacāmi Mudaliar's plays were mostly dramatized versions of novels. While dramatizing them, he adopted western techniques and thereby introduced new innovations in Tamil drama. He dramatized the novels like *Irājāmpāl*, *Irājēntirā*, *Cantirakāntā*, *Mōkaṇacuntaram*, *Āṇantakirusṇan* and *Mēṇakā*. All of them were successfully staged. The style of the novel was adopted in the dramatized version also. Even today some of the writers follow

Mudaliar's method while dramatizing novels.

Pavanantam Pillai wrote plays like *Ariccantiran*, *Pātukā-paṭṭāpiṣēkam* and others. Their dialogues abound in alliterations and assonances.

Some of the freedom fighters did yeomen service to the growth and advancement of Tamil dramas. The most unforgettable among them was T.P. Kirusṇacāmippāvalar who wrote and staged revolutionary plays like *Katarin Verri*, *Pampāy Meyil*, and *Teciyak-koṭi*. His dramas kindled among the people a thirst for freedom. The *Teciyakkoṭi* was based on the struggle for the national flag at Nagpur during the days of the Independence movement. He went to London with a dramatic troupe and staged Tamil dramas there. Pāvalar's other well known dramas were *Patipakti* and *Partruhari*. Some of his revolutionary plays were banned by the British rulers. Most of Pāvalar's dramas could fire the people with patriotic fervour.

R. Venkatacalam's play *Mutal Muḷakkam* is based on the heroic life of Vīrapāṇṭiak Kaṭṭapommaṇ. He was the first ruler in Tamil Nadu to oppose the East India Company's rule in the South, and was hanged by the English. Another play *Imayattil Nām* is a very emotional drama which portrays the heroic deeds of the ancient Tamils. Ettirājulu's *Auvaiyār* depicts the glory and culture of the Tamil country and the greatness of Tamil poets.

Cāmināta Carmā's *Pāṇapurattu Vīraṇ* was one of the plays that was banned by the British during their rule in India. The play became famous for arousing the patriotism of the people. The author's usual style of writing, which was often charged with emotion, could be seen in this play also. Another play *Apimaṇyu* was also known for his beautiful Tamil style.

T.K. Muttucāmi wrote plays like *Kumastāvin Peṇ*, *Kavi Kālamēkam*, *Rājā Partruhari* and *Vittiyācākar*.

S.D. Cuntaram wrote many interesting plays. Among them *Kaviyīṇ Kaṇavu* was known for infusing patriotism into the people. It was known for its literary excellence as well.

Kalaiṇar Karuṇāniti wrote *Mantiri Kumāri*, *Maṇimakuṭam* and other plays in a captivating style. Another interesting play, *Pūmpukār* is based on the epic *Cilappatikāram*. The plays *Puyal* and *Vālvil Inṇam* were written by the famous novelist Akilaṇ. Tēvaṇ's plays such as *Kōmatiyīṇ Kātalaṇ*, *Maitili*, *Tuppariyum Cāmpu* and others were written in colloquial Tamil. They were

known for their delightful humour, wit and sarcasm.

Many dance dramas were written during this period for the stage. The old type of Kuravañci plays were enacted along with new dance dramas based on the hagiography of Āṇṭāl.

Pāratiyār's epic, *Pāñcālī Capatam*, was staged as an interesting dance drama by the dramatic group headed by Cakasranāmam. The T.K.S. dramatic troupe distinguished itself by staging plays based on the lives of famous poets like Iḷaṅkōvaṭikaḷ and Auvaiyār. Other dramatic troupes like the Kaṇṇappā group and the M.S.T. Sabhai staged many dramas based on the lives of famous poets and Śaiva saints like Kampar and Māṇikkavācakar.

B.S. Rāmaiya wrote many plays with artistry. Like his short stories, his plays too were remarkable for rare insight and flight of imagination. Some of his most famous plays are *Malliyam Maṅkaḷam*, *Tērōṭṭi Maṅaṇ*, *Pōliskāraṇ Maḱaḷ*, *Piraciṇṇṇ Pañcāṭcaram* and *Kaiviḷakku*. The play, *Tērōṭṭi Maṅaṇ* is based on Karṇa's story as portrayed in the epic Mahābhārata. Karṇa was known to everyone as the son of a charioteer. But his royal heritage was known only to himself, Kunti and Kaṇṇaṇ. Karṇa's wife was unaware of this truth. She had married Karṇaṇ because of pressure and felt herself aggrieved at marrying a charioteer's son instead of a Kṣatriya. In spite of his glory, Karṇaṇ was unable to get her love and respect. Even when he was about to lead the Kauravar's army to the battlefield, Karṇaṇ's wife did not come forward to perform the ritual *āratti* and give him a warm send-off. Only when he died at the battlefield, she came to know of Karṇaṇ's royal parentage, and wept bitterly for having ignored him and behaved arrogantly towards him. The play is written with imagination and extraordinary skills.

The Independence struggle was a stimulating force for writing many interesting plays in Tamil during the twentieth century. Since the leading actors were patriots, they instilled patriotism into the people through their dramas. During this period a number of plays written based on the lives of historical figures such as kings, petty rulers, poets and others. Plays like *Auvaiyār*, *Rājarāja Cōḷaṇ* and *Kaṭṭapommaṇ* belong to this category. Kalki's famous historical novels like *Pārttipaṇ Kaṇavu* and *Civakāmiyiṇ Capatam* were dramatized. At the same time many social dramas were also produced during this period exposing the evils of the caste system and disparities in economic conditions. Plays like *Kaṇṇīrttuḷi*, *Vēlaik-*



*kāri*, *Or Iravu* and *Cantiramōkaṇ* were written by Ariṇar Annādurai with a set purpose. He used the play as a vehicle for social reform by portraying the darker side of life—especially those of the privileged classes of people—with stark nakedness so that people could see and laugh at the foibles of human nature. He enjoyed acting in the plays written by him. In the dramatic field Annādurai gave all encouragement to the many troupes, artists and writers.

K.S. Kirusnamurti's *Antamāṇ Kaiti* was staged several times and gained fame as an interesting drama with a strong plea for social reform. Nāraṇaturaikkaṇṇaṇ's plays like *Uyirōviyam* and others belonged to the category of social reform dramas.

### *Cinema and Radio*

Since the mid-twentieth century many talented writers have been utilised by the cinema. Among them mention must be made of Iḷaṅkō, Kalaiṇar Karuṇāṇiti, Srītar and Pāṇṭuraṅkaṇ. Many novels have been rewritten to suit the needs of the cinema. But for the cinema, those novels would have been dramatized. Since the cinefield has been attracting capable actors to its fold, the dramatic field experiences the dearth of talented artists. As the drama is unable to compete with the cinema and make economic gains, the development of drama is being retarded. Therefore the writers lack incentive to write plays.

However it is interesting to consider the role the radio has been playing in the advancement of Tamil drama. Off and on some full length dramas are relayed over the radio. Since one-act plays are shorter in length, they are broadcast often over the radio. One-act plays are written on different themes. Besides radio, weeklies and monthly magazines also publish many one-act plays. Writers like S.D.S. Yōki, Tuṇaivaṇ, Cuki, Nāṇal and others have written many one-act plays. Cuttaṇanta Pārati, Pūraṇam Vicuvanātaṇ, Kōmati Cuvāminātaṇ, S.D. Cuntaram and B.S. Rāmaiya's plays are worthy of mention here. Some other writers like K.S. Kirusnamūrti, Cīnivācarākavaṇ, P. Tūraṇ and others wrote plays in poetic form.

Most of the plays are written to pander to the public taste. Even plays which are meant for reading have been written to suit the interests of the present-day spectators. This becomes imperative as the cinema relies solely on the financial support of the



public. The people's tastes also fluctuate often. At one time plays with revolutionary themes such as eradication of caste system, inter-caste marriages, forgiving and accepting women who had lost their chastity and the evils of poverty were greatly appreciated liked by the public. Some writers who had emphasised only revolutionary ideas at the expense of art in their plays, succeeded in reducing the role of drama as a work of art. At a later stage people showed interest in seeing humorous plays as a pastime. Plays based on purāṇic stories lost their appeal at one time. Now interest has once again been revived in them, and the Purāṇic plays are back in demand. The constant fluctuation of people's interest makes many demands on the writers' talents. This affects the creation of plays of permanent literary merit.

### *Dialectal Dramas*

Several dialects are spoken in different parts of Tamil Nadu. Many plays have been written in dialects too. However such plays have not been successful despite their initial popularity. Only plays which kept colloquialism to the minimum have been successful. Likewise plays which are written in highflown literary style or entirely in a regional dialect are not only unsuccessful but become extinct after a time.

### NOTES

1. P.C. Puṇṇaivaṇanāṭa Mudaliar (ed.), *Tirukkurrālak Kuravañci*, Reprint (Madras, 1975), p. 63.

## Stories

### *First Novels*

In 1876, Vētanāyakam Pillai wrote his first novel. Since he was well versed in English, and had contacts with English officials he knew well the role of English novels in society. He also knew that people read novels avidly in their leisure hours. He realised the great need for novels in Tamil language. Though he was himself a poet and a close friend of Mīnāṭcicuntaram Pillai, Vētanāyakam felt that prose, and not poetry, was the right medium for conveying ideas to the people. Knowing that people had a natural liking for stories, he wanted to spread his high ideas through novels. With this object in view, he wrote the first novel, *Piratāpa Mudaliār Carittiram* in 1876. A decade later in 1887, his second novel *Cukunācuntari* appeared. Vētanāyakam created different types of characters and conveyed various emotions as well as ethical and cultural values in these two novels. With his knowledge of and experiences in Tanjavur and Tiruchchirappalli districts, Vētanāyakam drew vivid portraits of families and societies in these two districts.

The first novel, *Piratāpa Mudaliār Carittiram*, has the qualities of a standard literary novel. It portrays vividly the families of affluent farmers, their ambitions, interests, petty quarrels as well as social and cultural values. The hero of the novel himself leaves the house as a result of a quarrel between his family and that of the heroine. Thereafter the story narrates the hero's adventures

while on hunting expedition. In the second novel the heroine, who is abducted by a king escapes and takes refuge in a seminary for young ladies. In the end the king succeeds in finding her. In the meantime one of the ministers attempts to stage a coup. The result is a prolonged struggle for power. A character narrates the story in the first novel, whereas in the second the author tells the story. Both the novels are known for their wit, humour and pithy sayings.

### *Other Novels*

Like Vētanāyakam Pillai, many others contributed much to the growth of Tamil literature, though they were engaged in a different vocation in life. Among such savants Naṭēca Sastri (A.D. 1859–1906) was one. He was responsible for collecting the then prevalent stories among the people under the titles *Tirāviṭapūrvakālak Kataikaḷ* and *Mattiya Kālak Kataikaḷ*. He also translated some Sanskrit and English literary works into Tamil. One of the works, *Muttirā Rākṣacam*, was translated from Sanskrit. Some of Shakespeare's plays like *Measure for Measure* and *Twelfth Night* were translated into Tamil. Sastri's original novels were *Māmi Koluvirukkai*, *Kōmaḷam Kumariyānatu*, *Tikkarra Iru Kuḷantaikaḷ* and *Matikeṭṭa Maṇaivi*.

Rājam Iyer's (A.D. 1872–1898) *Kamalāmpāḷ Carittiram* is the first realistic novel in Tamil, which omits nothing that is painful and ugly and idealizes nothing. Mātavaiyā's *Patmāvatiiyṇ Carittiram* also exhibits the same literary feature. There was a time-lag of twenty years between Vētanāyakam's first two novels and the novels of Rājam Iyer and Mātavaiyā. This does not mean that no novels were written during those two decades. Though some novels like Kurucāmi Sarma's *Pirēma Kalāvatiiyam* were written, they did not acquire any literary status. The novel, *Kamalāmpāḷ Carittiram*, was serialized in a magazine called *Vivēkacintāmaṇi* between 1893 and 1895. It was later published in the form of a book in 1896. The novel portrays life in villages, and the sports, customs and habits of people in a particular area. It also pictures the contrast that exists between the lives of young lovers and the family life of middle-aged people. Iyer seems to have written one other novel entitled *Cītā*. Mātavaiyā's novel, *Patmāvatiiyṇ Carittiram* written in 1898, delineates its characters well. The novel reveals the author's zeal for social reform. In this novel, various events are linked together; one event leads to another and thus the story is

made up of a chain of events. In fact, the plot of the story centres around the suspicion of Patmāvati's husband. Besides *Patmāvatiyin Carittiram* Mātavaiyā wrote two other novels, *Vijaya Mārttāṇṭaṇ* and *Muttu Miṇāṭci*. In *Vijaya Mārttāṇṭaṇ*, the author shows from different angles the social life of Maṇavars and Chettiars, as well as lawyers and judges. The novel *Muttu Miṇāṭci* is a revolutionary one, for it tells the misery of a young widow in a biographical narration. For the first time in the history of Tamil novels Mātavaiyā gave a clear definition between "content" and "form".

After his retirement from services, Mātavaiyā (1872–1925) edited a magazine called *Pañcāmirtam*. He published in it poems, short stories, literary criticisms and political essays. He himself, under the pseudonym, Kōṇak Kōpālaṇ wrote poems and essays. Through this magazine he fought superstitious beliefs and out-moded customs prevalent in his times. He wrote stories for children like *Pāla Rāmāyaṇam*, *Pāla Vinōtak Kataikaḷ* and *Takṣṇa Carittira Vīrar* in a simple style. Two of his plays were *Tirumalai Cētupati* and *Pāristar Pañcanatam*. He also translated Shakespeare's *Othello* into Tamil. Mātavaiyā's verses were collected into two anthologies known as *Potu Tarma Catkīta Mañcari* and *Putumātirik Kalyāṇappāṭal*. His burning zeal for social reform became clear by the work, *Ācārac Cīrtiruttam*. His short stories were published in three volumes known as *Kucikar Kuṭṭik Kataikaḷ*. These stories gave an impetus to the growth of short stories in Tamil.

After Mātavaiyā, there was an interregnum in the field of Tamil novels. Before novels of literary merit could appear, Āraṇi Kuppucāmi Mudaliar, Vaṭuvūr Turaicāmi Iyengar, Poṇṇucāmi Pillai, Kōtaināyaki Ammaiyār and Raṇka Rāju wrote innumerable detective novels and light stories to thrill the readers. Most of these novels were based on western thrillers and detective novels. Only a few among them reflected or pictured the Tamil society.

K.S. Veṅkaṭaramaṇi also evinced keen interest in writing novels. He was a Gandhian and was deeply interested in the material progress of villages. At first he wrote his novels in English and later translated them into Tamil. He wrote two novels in Tamil, *Murukaṇ Ōr Uḷavaṇ* and *Kantaṇ Oru Tēcapaktaṇ* in 1928 and 1938 respectively. These novels kindled patriotism among the people. Since Veṅkaṭaramaṇi had a clear understanding of the village life, he created in his novels characters and events that would show the villagers how to lead a happy life.

R. Kirusānamūrtti, widely known by his pseudonym Kalki, carved a niche for historical novels in Tamil literature. At first he edited *Ānanda Vikāṭaṇ* and later *Kalki*, both Tamil weeklies. People recognised Kalki's talents as a writer after reading his editorials and essays in the two magazines. He was a connoisseur of music, drama, dance, painting and sculpture. He knew the art of creating interest and writing convincingly on any subject. He understood the spirit and force of the spoken language and used it as a powerful medium for his writings. Some of his outstanding social novels were *Tiyākapūmi*, *Makutaṭapati* and *Alaiyōcai*. He won great fame through his historical novels.

Kalki studied analytically the Pallava and the Cōḷa histories, their civilisations, customs and manners of the people and their mental attitude before embarking on the historical novels. He created imaginative characters in order to give his historical notes a story form. Such imaginative characters remain alive in the memory of those who read his novels. They in fact live in the minds of the readers more than the Pallava and the Cōḷa kings mentioned in history books. It speaks volumes for Kalki's extraordinary power of imagination. If the readers of *Civakāmiyiṇ Capatam* were to visit Māmallapuram; they would definitely recall the two important characters in the novel, the sculptor Āyaṇar and his daughter Civakāmi. While marvelling at the pieces of sculpture at Māmallapuram, the readers would think of these two characters as historical figures who lived there. They would praise these imaginative characters, forgetting the famous kings of the Pallava dynasty.

Those who read historical novels seldom realise that they are reading the events of the distant past. Instead they witness the events before their mind's eye and become one with it. Even the first historical novel, *Pārttipaṇ Kaṇavu*, creates this illusion. This is largely due to Kalki's powerful imagination and his narrative skill. The novel, *Pārttipaṇ Kaṇavu* is based on the events that took place during the reign of the Pallava king, Mahendravarman (A.D. 590-630). Another novel, based on the Pallava history is *Civakāmiyiṇ Capatam*. It is twice as lengthy as the first one and is regarded by many scholars as his best historical novel. *Civakāmiyiṇ Capatam* has gained the stature of a prose epic in Tamil literature. Another historical novel *Ponṇiyiṇ Celvaṇ*, based on Rājarāja Cōḷa I, (985-1015) the greatest of the Cōḷa rulers



who ruled South India with his capital at Tanjavur from the ninth century onwards is twice as lengthy as *Civakāmiyiṅ Capatam*. The story is narrated in a captivating manner. Many interesting and chivalrous character have been created. It is incomparable with other novels in scope and imagination. Throughout the novel the greatness of the Cōla empire as well as the intricacies of life are well brought out.

In *Civakāmiyiṅ Capatam*, the plot is not very complicated. However the development of the sculptor's daughter Civakāmi as a talented dancer, her struggles, her misereis and her noble aims are enough to raise the quality and standard of the novel. The readers' hearts are moved when Civakāmi, the queen among dancers, undergoes immense suffering when she is caught in the vortex of politics. Her life dedicated as it is to high ideals elevates the minds of the readers.

### *The Present-Day Novelists*

The Quit India Movement is the subject matter of the novel *Tiyākat Talumpu* written by Nāraṇaturaikkaṇṇaṇ. He was the editor of a Tamil magazine called *Piracaṇṭa Vikaṭaṇ*. During his period of editorship he encouraged writers to write on new themes. Some of his well-known novels are *Taraṅkiṇi*, *Kōkilā* and *Naṭutteru Nārāyaṇaṇ*.

The freedom struggle was the theme of some novels written during the pre-Independence days. Akilan's *Neñciṅ Alaika!* is based on the thrilling events connected with Netaji's Indian National Army. Another novel, *Pāvai Vilakku* written in a style charged with emotion, highlights the human qualities and a writer's struggle in life. Yet another novel, *Cinēkiti* discusses the problems of incompatible marriages. It portrays the sufferings of a women who was a victim of one such marriage, as well as the decision of her husband to let her lead the life of her choice. In *Cittirap Pāvai*, Akilaṇ explains with understanding the confusions in modern civilisation, the dominance of money power and how they affect the life of an artist. Besides social novels, Akilaṇ also wrote some interesting historical novels based on South Indian kings. The novel, *Vēṅkaiyiṅ Maintaṇ* drew its theme from some of the events that took place during the period of the Cōla empire, which dominated the political scene in South India between the ninth and the twelfth centuries. Some of the events that took place during the

Pāṇḍya and the Vijayanagar periods formed the background for the novels *Kayal Viḷi* and *Verrit Tirunakar*. In these novels the readers can perceive an artistic form and a style devoid of turgidity. Akilaṇ's short stories too exhibit these qualities. He creates a variety of characters. And the events narrated in many of the short stories and novels reveal Akilaṇ's rich experiences in life.

Several novels depicting different life situations and innumerable types of characters were written by Kōvi Maṇicēkaraṇ. He wrote many short stories too. In one of his novels, Maṇicēkaraṇ exposed through the portrayal of a professor's wife the futility of being dazzled by people in the cine field. In his historical novels, the historical background has been well explained and the story has been interestingly narrated. Historical novels such as *Akkiṇik Kōpam*, *Pilivaḷai* and *Cempiyaṇ Celvi* have gained literary status. Maṇicēkaraṇ's style of writing has its own grandeur and charm.

Makātevaṇ also wrote eight social novels under the pseudonym Tēvaṇ, and all of them were serialised in the Tamil weekly *Aṇanda Vikataṇ*. One of the novels which is a delectable feast for readers, is *Tuppariyum Cāmpu*. The best among Tevan's novels is *Mister Vētāntam*. His experiences as a newspaper editor are revealed through the novel. Wit, humour and sarcasm dominate his novels. One other novel, *Rajattin Maṇōratam*, portrays the efforts of a middle-class family to build a house. Most of the characters in his novels belong to middle-class families. The novels themselves clearly delineate the dreams and shortcomings of such people.

Va. Ra. was deeply interested in social reform and welcomed salutary changes in the social life of the people. He made fun of the superstitious beliefs, customs and manners prevalent in society. One of his important novels is *Kōtāit Tivu*.

The style of writing of M. Varadarājaṇ and K. Rājavēlu have also captivated many. Both the writers drew their themes from every-day life and stirred up new emotions in the minds of readers. Varadarājaṇ's outstanding novels are *Kaḷḷō Kāviyamō*, *Akal Viḷakku*, *Karittuṇṭu* and *Kayamai*. Rājavēlu's creations are *Aḷaku Āṭukiratu*, *Kātal Tūṅkukiratu*, *Kānta Muḷ*, *Iḷavēṇil*, *Makiḷampū* and others.

Citampara Cupramaṇiyam's *Itayanātam* depicts the life of a musician from a new angle. This novel brings out beautifully the musician's efforts to safeguard his liberty and prestige despite many impediments in life.

Among the novels that were written by K.N. Cuppiramaṇiyam, *Oru Nāl* deserves mention. The theme of this novel is how a person who had travelled extensively and had gained rich experience, awakened to an altogether new experience on his arrival at his village. It appeared to him for the first time that the simple life led by his aunt had profound significance.

M.V. Veṅkaṭarāmaṇ created highly imaginative novels. Some of them were serialised in a Tamil monthly called *Tēṇi* of which he was the editor. His lengthy novel *Nitya Kaṇṇi* narrates the story of Yayāti's daughter, one of the characters in the epic *Mahābhārata*. She had a unique boon of gaining her virginity even after giving birth to a child. After regaining her virginity, she had an opportunity to marry another person. Despite the boon and the consequent changes she was unable to forget her emotional attachments to her previous husband. The resultant emotional conflict is depicted in the novel. The character, which appears rather briefly in the *Mahābhārata*, has grown to great proportions in Veṅkaṭarāmaṇ's imaginative work and has won the hearts of the readers.

The novelist Vikkīramaṇ wrote a historical novel entitled *Nanṭipurattu Nāyaki*. Likewise *Cekacirpiyaṇ*'s historical novels include *Makarayāl Maṅkai*, *Ālavāy Alakaṇ*, *Nāyaki Nārcoṇai*, *Nantivarmaṇ Kātali*, *Aruḷmoḷinaṅkai* and *Tiruccirṇampalam*. Besides historical novels, he wrote some social novels and several collections of short stories also. Some of the short stories give a realistic picture of the life-struggle of the poor people.

Cāṇṭilyaṇ wrote many historical novels such as *Yavaṇarāṇi*, *Kaṭalpurā*, *Maṇṇaṇ Makaḷ*, *Malaivācal*, *Jīvapūmi*, *Kaṇṇimāṭam* and *Pallava Tilakam*. They were all serialised in magazines. His stories had the power to rouse the readers' interest and make them read avidly. N. Pārttacāraṭi, P.C. Kaṇēcaṇ and others wrote many historical novels and contributed to the growth of the novel in Tamil. Aru. Rāmaṇāṭaṇ's *Vīrapāṇṭiyaṇ Maṇaivi* is another notable imaginative historical novel.

Irātāmaṇāḷaṇ's *Pōrcilai* was an interesting literary creation. Likewise T.K. Cīnivācaṇ's *Āṭum Māṭum* was known for its imaginative treatment of the story.

The sex experiences after the adolescent period is the theme of the novel, *Viciri Vālai*, written by Cāvi. P.M. Kaṇṇaṇ wrote many novels full of realism. Particular mention must also be made of the novels written by Cōmu, Intirā Pārttacāraṭi, Nallaperumāl,

Umācantiraṇ, Māyāvi and Jayakāntaṇ.

Hephzibah Jesudasan's novels like *Puttam Vīṭu*, and *Doctor Cellappā*, which were written in a dialect spoken in south Travancore, brought her fame. Likewise R. Caṇmukacuntaram's novels like *Pūvum Piṇcum*, *Nākammāḷ* and *Alīyākkōlam* were written in a dialect spoken in the Koṇku region of the Tamil country. Other novels written in regional dialects include Pūvai Ārumukam's *Taṅkac Campā*.

On a certain festival season, the popular game among the villagers in Madurai is to tie an ornamental garland of palm leaf around the neck of a bull. This game is called Jallikkaṭṭu. Based on this game C.S. Cellappā has skilfully written a novel called *Vāṭi Vācal*.

Communist ideology forms the background for Rakunātaṇ's novel, *Paṇcum Paciyum*. It is written in a vigorous style. The rapid change in the life-style of three generations of people is artistically brought out in Nīla. Patmanāpaṇ's *Talaimuraikaḷ*.

Pārttacāraṭi has brought out several collections of short stories and articles and written many novels including the noted *Kuṛiṇci Malar* and *Poṇ Vilāṅku*. He has been rendering service to Tamil literature with an attractive style, with definite conventions and with a wide range of imagination. He has written many interesting novels and short stories without ever forgetting the ancient Tamil literary traditions. In fact these traditions are the basis for his new creations.

The villagers' love for and attachment to their farms are beautifully brought out in Caṅkararām's novel, *Maṇṇācai*.

Ārvi's novels reveal his imaginative skill. One of his novels *Aṇaiyā Viḷakku* is written with the idea of social reform. It is written in a simple style like his collection of short stories, *Ceṅkamalavalli*.

### *Novels and Magazine Writers*

Until the recent past the readers though they were in small numbers studied everything in depth and with care. Now the number of readers has increased phenomenally but most of them read superficially. The writers too until the recent times wrote with scrupulous care in order to gain the approbation of discerning readers. Now-a-days this trend has changed. Many write without much responsibility. They do so because they are confident they



can win the favour of a section among the increased number of superficial readers. With their support and financial gains these writers are able to make headway. To sustain their position they cater to the unrefined and uncultured tastes of the reading public. And by this process they join the gallery of popular writers. The editors of magazines too contribute to their popularity by inviting them to write in their magazines. Others who write with balance and refinement are rarely approached for contributions. This anomaly is largely due to the magazine editors's anxiety to increase the sale of their magazines. As a result those who write without depth and refinement gain fame in the magazine world. This in turn sets a bad example for others to follow. Writers in general experience many disappointments in life. In the absence of regular income they are often reduced to penury. Under such trying circumstances even some good writers end up in writing vulgar works for monetary benefits. This is the main reason for the appearance of some substandard works. Even among those who write mainly for money a few have artistic talents. Some of their works though written in haste and principally for money gain artistic standard. Once these writers carve a niche for themselves in the magazine world, they give up their straying and concentrate in writing works of great literary merit. They, in fact, emerge as refined and cultured writers. Such writers deserve commendation.

### *The Origin of Short Story*

The story can rightly be regarded as the cherished old wealth of humanity. The ancient Tamils also possessed a large wealth of stories, although they were not identified as novels and short stories. At that distant past both long and short stories were not unknown to them. Some short stories in varying lengths were found in verse forms in epics. They were also found during the medieval period of the Bhakti movement, as well as later periods. They were found among the Purāṇas too. However the existence of collections of short stories as a separate genre was unknown. They should have been in existence as part of the oral tradition among the people. Those short stories were handed over to posterity as oral literature. Rev. Beschi, the Italian missionary, attempted to write short stories on Western lines after mastering Tamil. His collection of short stories is known *Paramārtta Kurukatai*. There are other interesting collections of short stories like *Viñō-*



*taracamañcari* and *Katā Cintāmañi*. They are mere short stories in size, and cannot be regarded as a separate genre of literature known to us now as short stories. Only in the beginning of the twentieth century, short story as a separate type of literature came into existence in Tamil.

#### *V.V.S. Iyer*

V.V.S. Iyer was anxious to develop a body of short story literature in Tamil following the tradition established by western short-story writers like Nikolai V. Gogol, Edgar Allen Poe and O' Henry. Iyer rendered great services to Tamil literature in the midst of his struggles for political independence of the country. He was a close friend to the poet Cuppiramañiya Pāratīyār. Pāratīyār also tried his hand at writing short stories. He translated eleven short stories of Rabindranath Tagore from Bengali into Tamil. Some of the short stories which Paratīyār himself wrote include 'Āṇil Oru Paṅku,' 'Pūlōkarampai Katai' and others. His stories were published in two collections, viz. *Navatantirak Kataikaḷ* and *Katai Kottu*. However in all his short stories, the form that is so essential for the short story, is singularly absent.

V.V.S. Iyer is the first among Tamil writers to write good short stories giving attention to form, which is of paramount importance. His short stories, handed down to posterity, are in the form of a collection entitled *Maṅkaiyarkkaraciyaṅ Kātal Mutaliya Kataikaḷ*. One of the short stories in this collection, 'Kuḷattaṅkarai Aracamaram Coṇṇa Katai' depicts the grievous error of a lady who commits suicide on mere suspicion that her husband has left her to live with another woman. This story full of pathos is narrated in such a way as to arouse pity in the hearts of readers. Iyer has translated from Bengali into Tamil one of Tagore's short stories, 'Kāpūlivālā'.

The short stories that were written before the arrival of Iyer on the literary scene were not short stories in the strict sense of the term but mere stories in a short form. They in fact resembled a biographical narration with a pleasant ending. None of them ever projected an aspect of life, an incident, a human quality, an idea, an emotion or for that matter, any facet of a problem with insight and perspicuity. No single aspect of human emotion or any one facet of life is boldly brought out, as in the short stories in European languages. Attempts to write similar short stories in

Tamil were made only in the beginning of the twentieth century.

### *Putumaippittan*

S. Viruttācalam, under the pseudonym Putumaippittan, wrote many short stories. The term *Putumaippittan* literally means "one who runs madly after novelty." All his short stories prove the aptness of the pseudonym. His craze to experiment with new forms in literature, and his passion for creative art deserve tribute. All his stories are written in a vigorous style with novel ideas and forms. New techniques have been adopted in the narration of some of the short stories. Others are satires on the rich, yet some others depict the unrelieved suffering of the poor.

Putumaippittan adopted a vigorous style of writing, discarding archaic words and using only those in current usage. He had enormous confidence in his ability as a writer. Therefore he believed that he could convey to Tamils all the scenes he had witnessed and the ideas he had conceived through the medium of the short story. In fact he gave ample proof of it in his short stories. Wit and sarcasm formed part of his stories. He used short story as a weapon either to fight with or befriend society. He even used it as a weapon to show his personal aversion to others and attack them.

One of his short stories 'Āṇmai' is a veiled attack on the evils of child marriage. Two characters in the story Cīmā and Rukku were married when they were young. But they were unable to live together because of family differences over the wedding presents. Rukku went back to her parent's home where she attained puberty. Thereafter, without the knowledge of his parents, Cīmā enjoyed conjugal pleasures with her which resulted in her getting pregnant. Others suspected her chastity without knowing the truth. Cīmā did not divulge the truth for fear that his father would get wild with him. Unable to bear the shame and ostracism of society Rukku left her home to live in Madras. There she became mentally ill. When Cīmā met her accidentally one day, he brought her home without fear for anybody thus proving his brazen boldness to the world.

In another story, 'Kalyāṇi,' Putumaippittan depicts the miseries of second marriage. The main character in the story, Kalyāṇi was married as a second wife. But soon she got disillusioned with the marriage. As a result she fell in love with another person who induced her to elope with him. After wavering for sometime she finally refused to elope with him. The lover left the village for good.

Putumaippittan sees the different aspects of life in their stark nakedness and portrays them in his stories exactly as he has seen and understood them. The stories are full of wit and sarcasm. He laughs and pokes fun at people living around him and caricatures them in his stories. However he makes no attempt to lay down rules as to how life should be led or what ideals should be followed. He has the gift to depict with interest and realism whatever he has seen and the emotions which these have evoked in him. Since he has an artistic mind, whatever is imprinted on it, comes out in beautiful, artistic stories.

As in the purāṇas of yore, Putumaippittan makes God descend to the mundane world in one of his stories entitled 'Kaṭavuḷum Kantacāmiṭṭaiyūm.' God moves around the world here, there and everywhere. He mixes with people freely but to little purpose. Everyone pokes fun at Him. He realises that He cannot live in this world. "I can offer you boons dwelling apart; but I cannot live as one among you", so saying God goes back to His heavenly abode. It is a humorous story packed with wit and sarcasm. He has written highly imaginative stories in which he makes some supernatural beings like Vetālam and animate and inanimate things like bug and cot speak. However, most of the stories are based on the events of daily life, and written with stark realism.

Putumaippittan deserves the honour of being the Father of short stories in Tamil. The magazine *Maṇikkoti*, which was started in 1933, was responsible for giving fillip to the growth of Tamil short stories. In that year itself, Putumaippittan shone as a great short story writer. His short stories depict the evils of poverty, deal with social problems and criticise superstitions. Some of the titles of the stories like 'Pakta Kucēlā', 'Vināyaka Caturtti' and others will give the impression of Purāṇic stories. Yet some others are modern like 'Tuṇpakkēṇi', 'Nācakārak Kumpal', 'Maṇita Yantiram', 'Poṇṇakaram', 'Miṣinyukam' and others. And their themes are also modern and complicated. Even before 1941, he had written a highly controversial and imaginative story on Akalyai, and created a revolution in the interpretation of the term *karpū* or chastity. Later he wrote a different story on the same character under the title 'Cāpavimōcaṇam' and made a different type of revolution in the whole process of evaluation and thinking. In the former story, Akalyai's husband Kautamar contended that chastity was purity of heart and not of body and therefore pardoned Indra for seducing

his wife under false pretence. Indra is shown as an unusually noble character. In the latter story, Kautamar contended that there was redemption from a curse but not from a sin and cursed Akalyai to become a stone once again and proceeded to perform his *tapas*. These stories reveal Putumaippittan's confidence in creating silent revolution in interpreting cultural values. He also creates characters who stand up against evils at the cost of their lives. One classic example is 'Tuṇṇpakkēṇi'. In this story a woman worker in a tea estate in Sri Lanka murders the estate manager on learning that he who had raped her earlier has raped her daughter too.

### *Other Short Story Writers*

Cakkaravartti Rājagōpālāchāriār wrote short stories with a specific purpose. Most of the stories have some high ideals to convey. His stories bring out powerfully the evils of untouchability and other social evils rampant in his days. In one of the stories, 'Anṇaiyum Pitāvum', he portrayed the attitude of a Harijan boy towards his family, when he became an educated man holding high office. He forgot his moral responsibility towards the family and left his parents, brothers and sisters in misery. When there was a sudden change in his life, he felt for his irresponsible behaviour and renounced the wordly life. Another story, 'Tēvāṇai', depicts, through the character of a village woman how some who leave their villages in search of avocation in towns are reduced to begging. The evils of untouchability is graphically explained in the story and how Mukuntaṇ became an untouchable. Rājagōpālāchāriār's stories are mostly in a narrative style. He gives no importance to techniques in handling the short story.

In the firmanent of short story writing K.P. Rājakōpālaṇ has carved a permanent niche for himself. His short stories portray the joys and sorrows of family life as well as the whole gamut of human emotions. One story which moves the hearts of readers deeply, depicts the acute misery of a woman and the hopes which rise in her heart as she travels all through the night by train on receiving a telegram from the central hospital regarding the critical condition of her husband. The day dawns but in her personal life there is no more light. From the beginning to the end, the story, entitled 'Viṭiyumā' is told in a gripping manner. In his short stories Rājakōpālaṇ explains the mental attitude and actions of the charac-



ters with refinement suitable to the cultural traditions of the people even while discussing a topic like sex. Most of the stories portray the tranquil atmosphere of the villages as well as the mirth and misery of the ordinary village folks. Rājakōpālaṇ, who depicts the simple life of people in his stories, can be compared to a sculptor capable of making beautiful sculptures out of ordinary stone.

Another story, 'Tirai', depicts the joy of a widow when her sister is married. This story is a good example of brevity, clarity and depth of portraying feelings. Many of Rājakōpālaṇ's stories are known for choice diction and for the capacity to exploit emotions and touch the hearts of readers.

B.S. Rāmaiyā, the editor of the famous magazine *Maṇikkoṭi*, is credited with more than three hundred short stories, three novels and plays like *Tērōṭṭi Maṇaṇ Kaiviḷakku* and others. A famous short story of his is *Naṭcattirak Kuḷantaikaḷ*. In this story a child cries when it sees a shooting star, 'Someone has spoken a lie and therefore the star is falling off.' Rāmaiyā's short stories reveal his rich worldly experience, depth of understanding as well as his capacity to feel joy and sorrow in their intensity. His stories have an artistic form.

Kalki took keen interest in writing stories too. His opposition to superstitious beliefs is clearly reflected in the short story 'Kētāriyin Tāyār'. In other stories, the characters themselves take the role of social reformers condemning certain evil practices like shaving the heads of widows among the Brahman community, etc. Kalki does not believe in caste differences. His progressive attitude is reflected in some of his stories. Stories like 'Vīṇaipavāṇi', 'Kaṇaiyāliyiṇ Kaṇavu' and 'Tiruvaluntūr Civakkoluntu' have captured the hearts of many readers.

Maṇi follows a new method in writing short stories. They are a clear departure from the rest. Most of his stories are difficult to understand at the first reading. Even the themes of the stories are handled differently. Whether it is a description of a loudspeaker which blares forth from tea-shops, a young man's look at a woman, the barking of a dog in a bungalow or for that matter, the gait of a woman wearing high-heel shoes it bears the stamp of individuality. Most of his short stories like 'Aḷiyāccuṭar', 'Maṇakkōlam', 'Cāvil Piṇanta Cirusṭi', 'Pirapaṇcakāṇam' and others are written with deep feeling.

One of N. Piccamūrti's best short stories is 'Muḷḷum Rōjāvum'.



His knowledge of law and his court experience have been cleverly made use of in his stories. In his stories he analyses the actions and the motives of the characters. In describing a character pining for love, her mode of dress, the manner of her smile and even her gait graphically, he succeeds in bringing out her true intentions. In one of the stories, 'Kolupomma', a poor woman's anguish at being falsely accused of stealing a piece of jewellery is realistically portrayed. The way in which the whole episode is described wins our sympathy for the woman who undergoes so much agony and pain for nothing.

One of the long stories of T. Jānakirāmaṇ, 'Avalum Umiyum', portrays the difference between intellect and emotion. It is predominantly written in a dialect spoken in Tanjavur. Jānakirāmaṇ's experience of village life of the people in Tanjavur district is appropriately utilised in the story. Likewise the heterogeneous and homogeneous aspects of village and town life are well brought out. Sarcasm and aversion are deftly handled in the story.

A woman's urbanity is revealed in a story called 'Civappu Rikṣa', when she grieves on hearing some youths' smutty conversation. The arrogant behaviour of a wealthy man of an established family in a village is beautifully depicted in 'Tēvar Kutirai'. Another story, 'Kōpura Viḷakku' has a revolutionary theme. The story is about a woman who becomes a prostitute in order to bring up her family and how even after her death, the people of the town condemn her without ever realising the enormous sacrifice made by her. Provoked by their scurrilous words an elderly man puts out the lamp that is kept on the temple tower saying, "those who live in the darkness of ignorant beliefs need no lamp". Again, some of the views based on ignorant beliefs are blasted by Jānakirāmaṇ in a novel entitled *Ammā Vantā!*.

A collection of eleven short stories written by Jānakirāmaṇ has an unusual title, *Akpar Cāstiri*. As is implied in the title, the stories in the collection too reveal idiosyncrasy, wit, humour and sarcasm. The stories are written in a terse manner with excellent form, a prerequisite for a short story. Neither events nor mental attitudes are analysed in them. However, the characterisation is excellent.

Among Janakiraman's novels, *Mōkamuḷ* is worth mentioning. In this novel emotions pertaining to sex are explained with refinement and polish. *Uyirttēṇ* depicts a young man, who goes to a village in search of peace of mind but gets entangled in local issues.

Citampara Cuppiramaṇian's *Cakravākam* and other short stories have the depth and form needed for short story.

L.S. Rāmāmirutam possesses an individual approach and style in writing short stories. His philosophical attitude to life is well reflected in his stories. Whether the stories portray love, anger, struggle or for that matter anything, in all those themes, one can perceive the shadow of death falling on them. He has the unique capacity to portray the very thought process as it develops in the story. There is force as well as smoothness in his style. Despite these features, his philosophy cannot be understood by many. Nor the thematic riddle can easily be solved in his stories.

In the story entitled, *Jaṇaṇi*, the universal mother, Sakti comes down to the earth to analyse life. She is portrayed as one born to a characterless woman, and ultimately emerges as the universal mother. The preface and the summing-up reveal the author's novel vision.

Among the five collections of short stories written by Rāmāmirutam, the one that is worth mentioning is *Italkaḷ*.

Though C.S. Cellappā has written only a few short stories, they reveal his individuality as a story writer. He is interested in writing his stories with realism. A good collection of short stories written by Cellappā can be found in *Sarasāviṇ Pommaḷ*. Among the stories, 'Sarasāviṇ Pommaḷ' itself is unique. This story portrays the tragic situation of a person who moves with a girl, Saraṣā, thinking that she is a mere doll to him and finally ends up in himself becoming a doll in her hands. It is a good example to show that short stories can be woven with waves of thoughts and without any remarkable events.

Of the short story writers after 1950, Cuntara Rāmacāmi deserves attention. One can perceive light humour in his short stories. They also highlight some of his firm convictions. Rāmacāmi's second collection, *Piracātam*, contains eighteen excellent short stories. However, the fervour for socio-economic revolution found in the stories of the first collection is nowhere in evidence.

Rāmacāmi is competent in giving perfect form to his stories. No matter what the characters are—a policeman, a sick person or a temple priest—they are portrayed so realistically that they live not only in the stories but in the minds of the readers too. Depending on the need of the story, colloquial words spoken in Kanyakumari district are used in the conversation among the

characters. Another collection, *Akkaraic Cimaiyil*, contains some very good short stories. One of the scenes, in a short story where a band of vagabonds and orphans join together to oppose a capitalist's daughter, is portrayed with novelty.

In one of Rāmacāmi's novel's, *Oru Puḷiyamarattin Katai* also a new technique of writing has been employed. The hero of this novel is a tamarind tree. It is a lonely tree at the edge of a road, after the forest has been denuded and the tank filled up. Finally the tamarind tree is cut down. During this process, the many talks of the people in the town, the conversations between the chairman of the town council and a clerk, as well as the fluctuations in fortune of a petty shopkeeper, who has started his business under the tree are depicted in a gripping manner.

K. Aḷakiricāmi has to his credit convincing short stories in an attractive style. In a short story entitled, 'Āṇmakaṇ', he depicts the self-respect of a cook when slighted by the womenfolk in the house. They pay scant respect to his presence as a man in the house. Since he is not given due respect as a man, he gives up his work and leaves the house for good. Another story, 'Putu Ulakam', depicts how a Cettiyaṛ, a grocer in a village, loses his peace of mind on setting himself up in business in a metropolitan city and amassing wealth. All these interesting stories, with a message to impart, are found in the collection of short stories entitled *Tavappayaṇ*. Likewise many interesting stories are found in another collection, *Varappiracātam*.

The villages on the northern part of Tirunelveli district form the background for Aḷakiricāmi's short stories. The customs and manners of that area are reflected in his stories.

One other short story, 'Tiripuram', gives a portrait of the 1955-59 famine in the Tamil country. Though he expresses confidence in the emerging new world and welcomes new features in his personal life, he rarely makes new experiments in telling stories but narrates them convincingly, expounding noble aims and high ideals.

Aḷakiricāmi has written an interesting novel called *Doctor Anurātā*. There are many literary articles of his, wherein he mentions sound principles of literary criticism.

Vindaṇ's short stories which are vigorously written, bitterly attack the corruptions in society. Like his novel, *Pālum Pāvaiyum*, his short stories too are the mouthpiece of the poor and the

downtrodden. There are many stories with excellent form in one of the collection, *Orē Urimai*. Most of his characters are simple people who never get angry with society for the indignities heaped on them. But it does succeed in getting the readers annoyed with the privileged few in society. His similes, which are like pointed arrows prick those who are responsible for corrupting society. Some of the power-packed similes are as follows: "You come, like those who have come to power after successfully contesting the election—'go', 'go', said Caṅkar pushing him away with irritation." "His face blossomed on seeing her; not like the lotus on the rising of sun, but like the poor on seeing food." In his stories the milch cow becomes the guardian of a family; and a parrot becomes a prisoner. No distinction is made between the maid servant's stomach and the garbage can. In Vintaṇ's stories even the ordinary colloquial words gain in a new power and are keen and cutting. He portrays in many stories the evils of economic imbalance in society, and shows how it affects the lives of everyone.

Vallikkaṇṇaṇ is noted for writing satirical short stories. Stories like 'Āṇciṅkam', 'Kavitai Vālvu', 'Tattuva Taricaṇam' and others have brought him fame. Most of his stories are known for their depth of meaning and the force with which they are narrated. One of the stories, 'Periya Maṇuṣi', captivates the hearts of many readers.

Rakuṇātaṇ's short stories are known for their revolutionary ideas. They are written, like his verses, in an easy flowing style.

Ariṇar Annādurai's short stories like his dramas are written in a vigorous style. 'Rājātirājā', 'Pēy Ōṭippōccu', 'Cevvālai', 'Corkkattil' 'Narakam', and 'Piṭicāmpal' are stories displaying a wealth of imagination. These short stories reveal Annādurai's abiding interest in social well-being and social reform.

Another famous short story writer and novelist is Jeyakāntaṇ. One of his short stories, 'Virakti', portrays how a person unsuccessful in love is tormented by it throughout his life and turns misogynist. To forge his love affair he joins the army where he faces many trials and tribulations. But despite everything he is unable to forget his sweetheart. Another story, 'Iravil', portrays the chill penury of an orphan girl and her disappointment even after sacrificing her chastity for money. With the money that she gets she is unable to buy anything to appease her hunger, for what the man has given her after satisfying his lust turns out to be not half a rupee but a mere quarter of an anna. The anomalies of second marriage, espe-



cially young woman married to elderly persons, are beautifully portrayed in the story, 'Tālāṭṭu'. In this story, the heroine begins her first night in rocking the cradle of a baby born to the first wife. However, in the end, she succeeds in winning his affection for her. Some of the vagaries of human reason are portrayed in certain stories. For example, 'Tiricaṇku Corkkam', is about a woman teacher, who hated the idea of marrying in her youth, but later changed her attitude and married a student in her middle age.

Some other stories portray the effects of economic disparities in human life and bitterly criticise the basic causes for them. Jeyakāntaṇ is a master craftsman in highlighting the differences between the rich and the poor. In one story, 'Uṇṇāviratam', a woman worker admonishes her comrades thus: "Are you all men?" Stories of this nature indicate that they are written with a specific aim. However they possess an artistic form and are written without violating the rules of the short story.

There are some unique short stories about children, who die of hunger, in the short story collection, *Tēvaṇ Varuvāṇā*. Since Jeyakāntaṇ happens to be highly individualistic, caring little for public esteem or for connection with high people, his diction is forceful as well as powerful.

In a short story entitled, 'Pirammōpatēcam', Jeyakāntaṇ takes up the cudgels for the removal of caste restriction. The hero of this short story, a righteous Brahman, raises the social status of a low caste person to that of a Brahman by investing him with the sacred thread. There is a point in Jeyakāntaṇ's claim that his short stories deal with "the problem of problems." The same theme is treated in a different manner in another short story, 'Pakal Nērap Pācaṇcar Vaṇṭi'. In this story the revolution against the caste system is started not by the oppressed class but by the Brahmans themselves. The novelty of it lies in making the Brahmans take the initiative in social revolutions. In this story a Brahman woman while dying leaves her child in the custody of a low caste old man and requests him to perform the funeral rites on her death. The old man, as requested performs the rites.

K.V. Jakannatan is a wellknown writer of many short stories like 'Pavaḷamallikai' and 'Miṭṭāikkāraṇ'. In his stories old conventions appear with new brilliance. The story is about the pure love of a young girl and a woman who understood that love. At first that owner of the house prevents the girl from picking pavaḷamallikai



flowers, but later allows her to do so. The theme in this story is developed in stages and the narration is done interestingly. In another story, the author portrays the attitude of a vendor of sweets towards a child who picks some sweets from his basket. He scolds and beats the child for doing so. A little while later he carries his basket on his head and goes out to sell the sweets. On the way he stumbles and all the sweets fall into the gutter. Then only he regrets his having callously beaten the child. Once again when he sees the child running towards him, he gives it a loving kiss.

Ti. Ja. Ra's short stories like *Nonṭikkilī* have a delicate form of their own. He gains success in elevating short stories to the level of literature.

There are some writers who keep aloof from politics and social reform movements, but observing and analysing life in wise passiveness write interesting stories on the basis of their experience. In fact political uprisings and the zeal for social reforms do not touch the core of human life. They are like waves on the surface of the sea. As the deep sea is calm, so the core of the society too is calm except the happiness and sorrow that affect families. Some have an artistic mind to perceive happiness and sorrow, so common to families and to depict them naturally in short stories. K. Cantiracēkaran's 'Paccaikkilī' and 'Kaṇṇillāta Kapōti' fall under this category. Ta. Na. Kumaracami's short stories too depict incidents that occur in ordinary families.

### *Stories of Women Writers*

Many women writers have written short stories and novels portraying the internal struggles of women, family problems, love for children and other minute aspects of life and attained fame. Kōtaināyaki Ammaiyār edited a Tamil magazine and wrote several novels. After her many women writers are interesting themselves in the art of creative writing. Tiripuracuntari under the pseudonym Lakshmi has written *Kāṇcaṇaiyiṇ Kaṇvu*, *Mitilā Vilās* and other novels within a set framework. Rājamkirusṇaṇ has written interesting novels like *Peṇkural*, *Malarkaḷ*, *Amutamāki Varuka*, *Kuriṇcittēn*, *Vaḷaikkaram* and other novels. Since her husband was an engineer engaged in erecting hydro-electric power stations in the Nilgiri mountains, Rājamkirusṇaṇ could gain personal knowledge and experience of the people living in that region. Her famous novel, *Kuriṇcittēn* is based on these experiences. This novel depicts

the transformation that takes place in the life of Jōki, a member of the Padaga community residing in the Nilgiri mountains. It also portrays how the peaceful life in the montane region has been rudely disturbed by the development project undertaken by the government. Besides it describes how the mountain tribes, who had no awareness of money, have learnt its importance and how they toil long and hard to obtain it. In the dynamic social change, Jōki's family wedded to traditional culture, is unable to adapt itself. Therefore it is left behind in the race for gaining economic power. Kariyamallar's family on the other hand adopts modern techniques of acquiring wealth. His family grows mainly cash crops and accumulates wealth. As a result of the economic disparity between these two families the love episode of two younger members of the families become complicated. In the end, however, true love breaks through the barriers. Before the young peoples love can be consummated Jōki's parents die after undergoing many sufferings. The novel, *Kuṛiñcittēṇ* can pass for an epic in prose.

Both Cūtāmaṇi and Vacumati Rāmacāmi have produced short stories as well as novels. It is rare among women writers to deal with burning social issues or revolutionary themes in their writings. They largely describe in their novels the change in mundane life, the social inequalities and the resultant problems. These themes are handled with remarkable ease as if one is living in a park and portraying the changes nature effects to please one's senses. Cūtāmaṇi depicts in her psychological stories the vacillations of the mind. Her noteworthy novel is *Cōtaṇaiyiṇ Muṭivu*.

Carōja Rāmamūrtti is adept at depicting the family woman in her stories. Her portrayal of children is never forgotten by the readers. Her mellifluous style is suitable for describing the basic culture of the people. Her novels are *Laṭciyavātam*, *Paṇittuḷi* and *Muttuccippi*.

Kiruṣṇa, known as Ampuṇam, has written novels like *Rāji* and *Matukkiṇṇam*. Vimalarāmaṇi writes both for adults and children. Kuyili Rākjēsvari's novels, *Uṇarnta Neñcam* and *Teyvam Ciritatu* are written with noble aims. Other women writers like K. Carasvati, K. Cāvittiri and Anuttamā have written stories which reflect the fundamental culture of family life. All their stories possess an artistic form.

Kōmakal (Rājalaṭcumi) is another woman writer known for her interest in experimenting with new thematic trends in writing

stories. She has written interesting novels like *Paṇimalar* and *Anpin Cittiram*. She has written many interesting short stories too. In a short story entitled, 'Kāṇal Nīr', she describes how an elderly person after witnessing the love scenes of a couple in a park, feels sorry for having agreed in his earlier days to an arranged marriage. He feels that he has missed an aspect of life worth experiencing. In fact the elderly person appreciates and blesses their love. Later, however, he comes to know that the lover has married some other lady and therefore presumes that the earlier love stands terminated. However, some weeks after the marriage, the elderly person sees once again the old pair of lovers in the same park. Now he realises that what he has considered as true love is nothing but a mirage.

K. Jeyalaṭcuṁi's novel, *Tālvurra Neṇcam*, portrays the vicissitudes of family life. Kirūttikā's (otherwise known as Maturam) novels, though they belong to the same category, excel in depicting the working of the inner mind. Two of her notable novels are *Pukainaṭuvil* and *Ponkūṇṭu*.

### *Translated Novels*

Tribute must be paid to translators who translate stories and novels from other languages into Tamil for the benefit of the reading public. Among them, Kā: Sri. Sri., T.N. Kumāracāmi, T.N. Cēṇāpati and Jayarāmaṇ are worth mentioning. Kā. Sri. Sri., has rendered the leading Marathi writer, Kāṇṭēkar's novels and short stories into Tamil. His famous novels like *Iruturuvam*, *Kirauṇcavatam*, and *Erinaṭcattiram* have been popular among the Tamils like any other good Tamil novels. Some others have translated Marathi writer Paṭkē's stories into Tamil. At the beginning of this century the stories of Saratchandra and Bankim Chandra were popular in Tamil country. Both Kumāracāmi and Cēṇāpati have attained fame by translating Rabindranath Tagore's poems and stories. There are some who have been translating the stories from Hindi, French, German and Russian literatures into Tamil. As a result of these translations, the readers' faculty of critical evaluation has sharpened. Now there has been increasing effort to translate stories and poems from other Dravidian languages such as Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada. Cittaliṅkayyā has translated the Kannada writer, Karanth's work *Maraliṁaṇṇikē* into Tamil. M.S. Kamalā, Kōpināt and others translate Telugu and Malayalam stories into Tamil.

### *Eagerness in Imagination*

The Tamils too, like people in other countries, have shown great eagerness for reading love and miracle stories. In the earlier days epics and *purāṇas* satisfied the eagerness of people by portraying various incidents of love and miracles. Later the *ulās* and the *talapurāṇas* played this role. With the advent of printing machines, many old stories, *Vikkiramātittan Kataital*, stories relating to saints, *Pañcatantra* stories, and *Arabic Kataikal* satisfied the interests of the people. In the twentieth century when short stories and novels became popular, people began to show greater interest in imaginative love stories, miracles and perversities of various nature. Now the treatment of a story has taken a new turn. Descriptions of actions have been considerably reduced in modern stories. Instead greater attention is given to the explanation of the nature of the human mind. Despite this development people crave to read stories which portray the human mind swayed by love as well as the perversions of sex maniacs. As a result lust and perversions of sex have become the basic themes for some writers, whose main aim is to satisfy the lower instincts in man. Some of the stories based on these subjects managed to achieve literary form. As a result some writers have gained name, fame and material success. Taking this as a cue many writers have started writing on these themes. They succeed in portraying lust in their stories but do not achieve the artistic effect which is the basic thing to be aimed at in any form of creative writing. Like the *talapurāṇas* of the medieval period, the stories which depict the lower instincts in man lack realism. It is difficult now to say how many of these "new wave stories" will survive the test of time. However some writers have this determination. "I don't care whether or not my works achieve literary stature in the future. I care to gain fame and money in my span of life." Writers of this nature neither worry about the future nor the present. How their stories will corrupt the minds of their readers and lead them astray is no concern of theirs. It is difficult to say whether the stories in this category which have gained fame, will in the future flourish as pieces of literature.

### *Many Types of Creations*

If we generally evaluate the literary scene in Tamil Nadu there has been a tremendous growth of imaginative works like novels and short stories. After 1930 many writers have appeared on the



scene and they have been contributing much to the growth of Tamil literature by writing stories. It is in the field of short stories more than in novels, there has been a phenomenal growth. Among the voluminous production of short stories, undoubtedly there are some second-rate, borrowed and plagiarized stories. Pressed for time some write haphazardly stories which appear in weeklies, monthlies, and even in special annual numbers. Amidst these pseudo-stories standard and excellent stories have been continuously produced. There are some critics, who with certain stringent rules evolved on the basis of their own whimsicalities, evaluate the modern creative writings and reject most of them as sub-standard. This attitude of the modern critics reminds one of the Tamil critics of yore, who tried to assess the merits of ancient classical works with the aid of a grammatical work entitled *Pāṭṭiyal*. In spite of the modern critics with their strong likes and dislikes, there are many writers who write stories with excellent form and theme. All stories, again, cannot conform to a pattern of rules or whims and fancies of critics. If one realises the dictum that creative art emerges out of many themes and takes many shapes and forms, then one can perceive that the growth of novels and short stories in Tamil language has taken different forms and patterns. As the society and its problem vary periodically, the central theme of stories too change. In this century we find a large number of authors who have written stories on a variety of themes from their own perspective. These writers fall under different categories. Some have looked calmly at the intricacies of social problems; while others with anger and agitation and describe them accordingly in their works. Yet another group of writers view the present day narrowness and meanness in the context of their knowledge of the extensive history of the world. Some other writers forget the future and the past and portray in an exaggerated manner the present day problems. Whereas another section depicts the sorrows and struggles of others as their own. One should not forget in this connection that as there are writers with different aims, so there are readers at different levels of mental development and perception. Therefore it cannot be said with certainty that the best novels and short stories would appeal to everyone. Even if the stories possess a beautiful form and are narrated with emotion, they may not survive as good literary pieces, unless they bear on life and hold up the mirror to life. It is praiseworthy that many standard stories exist



in Tamil language transcending the aforesaid limitations. It is remarkable that the Tamil language has been making appreciable progress in the twin fields of novel and short story as it had done in the earlier periods in epics and poetry.

### *Man and Society*

We find a marked departure in the choice of subject matter in novels and short stories, the two popular genres of this century. This change is noticeable in modern poetry also. What is that departure? In previous centuries the subject matter of poetical works would be either God, a patron philanthropist, or the ruler. In modern works there is no place for any of them. The modern writers concern themselves about men; their imagination is centred around the human society. Though many writers worship God, their pen does not worship Him. The writers enjoy the company of their kind; but even that company never always lingers in their imagination. They write seeking money, nonetheless money does not occupy a place of prominence in their emotion. Only society and its component part man, his life struggle, sorrows and happiness become the subject matter for the modern writer. This is the paramount theme in today's novel, short story, drama and poetry. God is the subject matter only in the writings of a few. Verses and essays written in honour of the rich disappear as soon as the tribute giving meeting is over. Now a stage has come where only emotional and imaginative writings which have relevance to man and society can attain literary status. Worship of God is an individual's emotional act and regarded as such by scholars. Contact with the rich again concerns the writer's individual relationship. In modern times feelings for man and society have usurped the place of God and the rich in literature. And this trend is clearly revealed in the modern Tamil novels and short stories.

## Essays and Other Types of Works

### *Old and New*

It was the custom among the Tamils in earlier days to write in verse on any subject whether medicine, astrology, ethics or gospels. Literary works like dramas, as well as imaginative and written in descriptive writings were put into verse. It was due to the importance given to versifiers in society, that everything was written in verse. In earlier times it was the versifiers who were regarded as scholars. However with the greater output of prose works from the seventeenth century onwards this trend has changed. Even during this period there was no complete cessation of writing in the medium of verse. In fact a considerable number of works were written in verse along with prose. But the people read only those poetical works that attained a certain literary standard. Other works were not read and their authors too were forgotten. Mīṇāṭcicuntaram Pillai is an excellent example to cite here. Though he has written many works in verse, today he is remembered to some extent for his work, *Cēkkilār Piḷḷaittamiḷ* and for his biography written by his illustrious student Cāmināta Iyer. But other poets of Pillai's generation are conveniently forgotten.

The poems of Irāmaḷiṅkar, the father of the eclectic movement in Tamil Nadu and the saintly soul known for his compassion are remembered today largely for their simplicity, sweetness and melliflueness. Likewise Māyūram Vētanāyakam Pillai is remembered because he happens to be the forerunner of novel literature in

Tamil and has to his credit devotional songs and didactic poems. Today, works written in verses following old tradition as well as on old themes are not appreciated. The great scholar and poet, Cōlavantāṇ Caṇmukam Pillai has been relegated to the limbo of oblivion despite his writing some interesting poetical works such as *Inṇicai Venpā Irunūru*, *Paṇcatantira Venpā*, *Ēkapāta Nūṇṇantāti*, *Vaḷḷuvar Nēricai* and others. Notwithstanding this trend people still patronize to some extent those poets who compose poems with new ideas, emotions and imagination or emotions conveyed in new forms.

Some scholars who lived towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century wrote both poetical and prose works. Let us consider their contributions to Tamil literature.

#### *Cūriyanārāyaṇa Sastriyar and Others*

Cūriyanārāyaṇa Sastriyar (1870–1903 A.D.) changed his name into Paritimārkalaiṇar to conform to his conviction of writing chaste Tamil without the admixture of Sanskrit. He edited the Tamil magazine *Nāṇapōtiṇi* between 1897 and 1898. Since he was interested in drama and was much concerned about the paucity of good literary dramas, Sastriyar wrote several of them like *Kalāvati*, *Rūpāvati*, *Māṇavijayam*, *Mativāṇaṇ* and others. The basic rules of dramatic art are set out in his work entitled *Nāṭakaviyal*. Sastriyar's poetical works were written in traditional style. Two of his works, *Tamiḷ Moliyiṇ Varalāru* (History of Tamil Language) and *Tamiḷppulavar Carittiram* (History of Tamil Poets) were considered very useful books during his time. He also translated a Sanskrit work, *Midrā Rāṭcacam* into Tamil. Though he was learned in Sanskrit and English, Sastriyar's main concern was the improvement and progress of Tamil language and literature. His Tamil prose style was archaic, but it was lively and pregnant with novel as well as useful ideas. Therefore Sastriyar's works were very stimulating during his period.

Piṇṇattūr Nārāyaṇacāmi Iyer (1862–1914) wrote his works in the traditional pattern although he lived at a time when new literary types were being tried. Among the works that were published mention must be made of *Māṇākkar Ārruppaṭai*, *Tēṇṭillai Ulā*, *Tēṇṭillaik Kalampakam* and *Kaḷappālp Purāṇam*. His other works a *purāṇam*, an *ārruppaṭai*, a *kōvai* and some others were never

published. None of Iyer's works was able to preserve his fame as a scholar. Only his commentary on the *Caṅkam* classic, *Narṇṇai* upholds his fame.

Maṇōṇmaṇi Ammaiyār (1863–1908), who is now unknown to many, is worth remembering as a reputed women scholar during her period and as the author of fifteen poetical works.

Calacalōcaṇṇ Chettiar (1876–1897), who died at the young age of twenty-one, distinguished himself as a traditional as well as modern versifier. He translated into Tamil Shakespeare's play, *Cymbeline*.

Aṇṇāmalai Reddiar who lived in the nineteenth century, composed *antāti*, *piḷḷaittamiḷ* and other poetical works. Among the poems which were based on folk-lore and could be sung with the accompaniment of music *kāvaṭiccintu* has a special rhythm of its own. Written with a powerful diction and depth of meaning, it is usually sung by the devotees of Lord Murukaṇ while going to the temple on certain festive occasions with *kāvaṭi* on their shoulders. On such occasions the devotees carry milk and flowers. Reddiar's knowledge of music helped him to compose poems in *kāvaṭiccintu* metre which possessed the power to move the hearts of listeners. Those soul stirring musical compositions brought him undying fame.

R. Rākava Iyengar (1870–1948 A.D.) was a great scholar. He had studied Tamil literature in the traditional way and written many profound works. He also edited the first Tamil research journal, *Centamiḷ*, which was published from Madurai. Besides he wrote several essays highlighting the literary features in Tamil classics. Apart from writing an elaborate commentary on the *Caṅkam* classic, *Kuruntokai*, Iyengar brought out research works like *Vaṇcimānakar Nallicaippulamai Melliyaḷār* and *Tamiḷmoḷi Varalāru* (History of Tamil literature). Following the traditional method he composed poetical works like *Puvieḷupatu* and *Pārikatai*. They contain many imaginative poems pregnant with meaning. The poetical work, *Pārikatai*, which was written in *venpā* metre highlights the greatness of the patron of poets and philanthropist, Pāri of *Caṅkam* fame. Apart from these original works Iyengar translated the *Bhagavad Gīta* and *Śakuntalā* from Sanskrit into Tamil.

M. Rākava Iyengar (1878–1960 A.D.) who was a relative of R. Rākava Iyengar, was a great research scholar. Even at a very



young age he edited the Tamil journal *Centamil*. He wrote many useful research essays concerning Tamil literature and literary history. He had a classical style of writing Tamil with an admixture of rare literary words.

Ilakkumaṇap Pillai while holding an important position in government service, contributed greatly to the growth of Tamil. He was the foremost among the few who rendered conspicuous service to the triple branches of Tamil, namely prose, poetry and plays. Apart from translating many English plays into Tamil, Pillai wrote original Tamil plays as well. He also possessed the gift of writing verses in *kaṭṭalaikkalitturai* metre without alliteration and assonance. A departure from tradition, they were undoubtedly a novelty in Tamil literature. Besides these he composed over two hundred *kīrtanas* which could be sung to the accompaniment of the musical instrument, *vīṇai*.

#### V. O. C. and Civa

Some among the patriots, who were in the forefront of the struggle for political independence, rendered great service to Tamil literature. Of such patriots V.O. Citamparam Pillai (1872–1931 A.D.) was one. He was the first among the nationalists to start the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company, which competed with an English company in plying ships between Tuticorin and Sri Lanka. As a result of this and his own political stance against the English, Pillai was clapped in prison and tortured. He was also a close friend of poet Pāratiyar and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. It was Tilak who gave Pillai the much needed financial support when he was in dire need. Though he had dedicated his life to the service of the nation, Pillai evinced great interest in writing in his mother tongue. Since he was a demagogue capable of appealing to the feelings of people, there was pliability in his Tamil style. He wrote some prose works. He translated the English thinker, James Allen's ideas into Tamil in three separate works entitled *Maṇampōla Vālvu*, *Akamē Puram* and *Valimaikku Mārkkam*. These three works explain in brevity some of the abstruse philosophical ideas. Two of his original works, *Meyyaram* and *Meyyarivu* were in fact didactical works which explain the tenets of life based on the ideas found in *Tirukkural*. One of his poetical works, *Eṇ Pāṭal Tirattu*, which contain one hundred verses, inculcate in people devotion to God. Another notable poetical work, *Vaḷḷiyammai Carittiram*,



which was composed by Pillai tells movingly the biography of his wife. Now-a-days very few read his works. However with the object of spreading his fame many associations are established in Tamil Nadu in his name for rendering service to the people.

### *Cāmināta Iyer*

In the twentieth century, Cāmināta Iyer did signal service to Tamil which brought him undying fame. He devoted his life to the collection and edition of works written on palm-leaves. He published them without mistakes after careful study and analysis. In addition he wrote valuable prefaces, notes about authors, and elaborate explanatory notes about the contents of the books.

Thanks to his indefatigable efforts the Caṅkam classics, epics like the *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*, many *purāṇas*, *tūtu*, *kōvai*, *ulā*, *paraṇi kuravaṅci* were brought out in superb editions. His critical notes on *Puranānūru*, the *Pattuppāṭṭu*, the *Patirruppattu* and other works are research wealth bequeathed to the Tamil literary world. In addition he retold in prose the stories of epics briefly. Such works include *Maṇimēkalai Kataic Curukkam* (The Brief Story of the epic *Maṇimēkalai*), *Buddha Dharma*, *Utayaṇaṇ Kataic Curukkam* (The Brief Story of *Utayaṇaṇ*). Iyer wrote an elaborate biography of his teacher, Mīnāṭcicuntaram Pillai. It is a unique work among the biographies in Tamil. Short biographies of other savants too appeared. His collection of essays include, *Nāṇ Kaṇṭatum Kēṭṭatum*, *Paḷuiyatum Putiyatum*, *Nalluraik Kōvai* and *Niṇaivu Maṇcari*. His analytical notes, critical essays and biographies contributed much to the growth of Tamil prose in this century. Iyer's prose style is proverbial for flawless simplicity and clarity. He did not make a mark as a poet, though he was good at composing verses. His noble life which was dedicated to Tamil, in fact brought great fame to Tamil. Poet Pārati immortalized him in the following lines:

You will be praised by poets  
You will be blessed by them  
You will live in undying fame  
So long the Tamil language lives

### *Maṇaimalai Aṭikal*

Maṇaimalai Aṭikal (1876–1950) was a scholar in English, Sanskrit and Tamil. Since his original name, Cāmi Vefācalam, was

of Sanskrit origin, he changed it to *Maṛaimalai Aṭikaḷ*, a corresponding term in pure Tamil. The articles that he wrote for journals in his youth reveal his devout interest in Śaivism. And at the same time they reveal how he approached Śaivism from the angle of social reform. Aṭikaḷ wrote poetical works like *Murukar Mummaṇikkōvai* and *Cōmacuntarak Kāñciyākkam*, on the pattern of old literary works in Tamil. These two poetical works have brevity and depth of meaning. Aṭikaḷ was largely responsible for the growth and advancement of research works in literature. The most famous among his research works are *Mullaippāṭṭu Ārāycci*, and *Paṭṭiṇappālai Ārāycci*. From 1916 onwards, he wrote Tamil without the admixture of loan words from other languages. As he had changed his name into pure Tamil, so the journal *Nāṇacākaram*, which he edited became *Aṭivukkaṭal* to conform to his idea of pure Tamil. In fact his efforts to get rid of Sanskrit loan words in Tamil, gathered momentum and became the well known 'Pure Tamil Movement'. In a florid and rich prose style he wrote about the greatness of Śaivism and the heritage of Tamils. Aṭikaḷ translated the play, *Śakuntalā*, from Sanskrit into Tamil. In addition, he wrote another play *Ampikāpati Amarāvati* based on the life of a Tamil poet. Two of his novels were *Kumutavalli* and *Kōkilāmpāḷ Kaṭitaṅkaḷ*. The Tamil prose style which Aṭikaḷ used reflected his desire to achieve perfection and discipline in whatever he attempted. He had an abiding interest in the works written by the great English writers. Their approach is reflected in Aṭikaḷ's own research papers. However his imagination always functioned within the limits of Tamil literary tradition. As a result his works added to the richness of Tamil. Aṭikaḷ is remembered today as the father of the *Taṇi* (Pure) Tamil movement. One of his scholarly and extensive research works is *Māṇikkavācakar Varalārum Kāla Ārāycciyum*. Other outstanding works are *Paḷantamiḷk Koḷkaiyē Caivacamayam*, *Tamiḷar Matam*, *Ampalavāṇar Tirukkūttu*, *Tamiḷttāy*, *Tamiḷnāṭṭavarum Mēlnāṭṭavarum*, *Murkālappirḱālat Tamiḷp Pulavar*, *Makkaḷ Nūṛāṇṭu Uyirvāḷtal Eppaṭi*, and *Aṭivuraik Kottu*.

#### *Makiḷṇaṇ and Others*

K.P. Cantōṣam wrote many interesting articles under the pseudonym *Makiḷṇaṇ* in this century. Imitating the English humorists, he also wrote witty essays in Tamil. There was a new

form and aim in his essays. One of his important works captioned *Vatakkum Terkum* is an interesting work written in a novel manner and in a style, devoid of foreign loan words.

Pūvai Kaliyānacutarar (1854–1918 A.D.) wrote several poetical, prose, literary and expositive works on Śaivism.

K.S. Cīnivācap Pillai (1852–1929 A.D.), who was a lawyer by profession, did researches in Tamil inscriptions and literary history. He wrote a very good book on the history of Tamil literature.

Anavaratavināyakam Pillai (1877–1940 A.D.) wrote thought-provoking research works on Tamil commentators and poets like Naccinārkkīniyar and Auvaiyār respectively. Besides writing the history of Tamil savants, he evinced keen interest and showed the way in compiling the proverbs prevalent in the Tamil country.

K.N. Civarāja Pillai (1879–1941 A.D.) initially edited English papers and distinguished himself as an essayist in that language. Later he took interest in Tamil and wrote some research works. He also wrote a book of poems entitled *Ciru Pāmālai* for children.

P.V. Māṇikka Nayakkar (1871–1931 A.D.), an engineer in the government service, was an erudite Tamil scholar. He wrote works like *Kampan Pulukum Vālmiki Vāimaiyum*, *Aññāṇam* and others. His style was noted for wit and sarcasm. He was deeply interested in doing research in Tamil phonetics.

Celva Kēcavarāya Mudaliar (1864–1921 A.D.) wrote many essays intermingled with proverbs and showed depth and finesse in handling modern Tamil prose. His numerous prose works include *Tiruvalluvar*, *Kampanatar*, *Tamil*, *Tamil Viyācaṇkal*, *Viyāca Mañcari*, *Kaṇṇaki Katai*, *Apinavak Kataikal*, and *Pañcalatcaṇam*. Besides these, he wrote on *Akbar*, *Ranade* and *Robinson Crusoe* in Tamil.

Vellakkāl Cuppiramaṇya Mudaliar (1857–1946 A.D.), though fully aware of the modern literary trends, wrote mainly conventional type of literary works. His poetical works abound in pun, *yamakam* and *tiripu* types of word juggleries. One of his poetical works, *Nellaic Cilētai Venpā*, was written in praise of Tirunelveli. It is known for its jugglery of words. He translated Milton's *Paradise Lost* into Tamil in the *viruttam* metre. Spenser's work on education was also translated by Mudaliar into Tamil. Two of his other poetical works were *Kōmpi Viruttam* and *Akalikai Venpā*.

C.K. Cuppiramaṇya Mudaliar (1878–1961 A.D.) who was a distinguished lawyer at Coimbatore, appeared for the famous

nationalist V.O. Citamparam Pillai in his court cases. Mudaliar was a devout Saivite as well as a Tamil scholar. His monumental work is the elaborate commentary on *Periyapurāṇam*, the greatest of the Saiva epics. Besides this major scholarly work, he wrote some prose and poetical works. Among the prose works, the most famous one is on Cēkkiḷār, the author of *Periyapurāṇam*. He wrote his autobiography under the title *Oru Pittaṇṇi Cuyacaritam*.

Pūraṇaliṅkam Pillai (1866–1947 A.D.) served as a professor of English in some colleges affiliated to the University of Madras. He wrote the history of Tamil literature in English. Some of his prose works in Tamil were *Tamiḷk Kaṭṭuraikaḷ*, *Maruttuvaṇ Makal*, *Tappili* and *Kataiyum Karpaṇaiyum*.

K. Cuppiramaṇiya Pillai (1885–1945 A.D.) distinguished himself in the field of law and did great service to Tamil. He wrote the biographies of Śaiva saints like Tiruṇāṇacampantar in prose. He was the first author to write a commentary on the *Tiruvācakam*. He also wrote a history of Tamil literature under the title *Tamiḷ Ilakkiya Varalāru*. Pillai's other works reveal his capacity for research.

Katirēcaṇ Chettiar's (1881–1953 A.D.) *Urainataik Kōvai* contains many literary essays. They are written in a crisp style with choice words drawn from ancient classics. With his knowledge of Sanskrit, Chettiar was able to translate some Sanskrit works into Tamil. The Sanskrit work *Miruccakaṭikā* was translated into Tamil under the caption *Maṇṇiyalcirutēr*. Apart from these he wrote some poetical works too. One of Chettiar's important contributions to Tamil was his elaborate commentary on the first section of the *Tiruvācakam*. The value of commentary lies in distilling out the inner meaning of the devotional poems.

N.M. Vēṅkaṭacāmi Nattar (1884–1944 A.D.) adopted an archaic literary prose style in writing several of his essays and research works. Many of his essays were brought out in book form. The important research works were *Kapilar*, *Nakkīrar* and *Vēḷir Varalāru*. He attained fame with his erudite commentaries on ancient literary works.

Vēṅkaṭarājulu Reddiar was a scholar both in Sanskrit and in all the four Dravidian languages. He was a great research scholar in comparative study of morphology and syntax of these languages. His several essays and some research works reveal the depth of his scholarship.



K. Vaṭivēlu Chettiar (1863–1936 A.D.) who was a scholar in many fields including grammar, literature, logic and Vedānta philosophy, taught these branches of knowledge of many students and made them scholars. Chettiar showed abiding interest in Advaita Philosophy. He was the editor of a Tamil weekly, *Lōkō-pakāri* and a monthly, *Cakkaravarttiṇi*. Apart from these pursuits, he wrote several works on Vedānta in Tamil prose. His glosses to Parimēlalakar's commentary on *Tirukkural*, is written in a comprehensible style, marked by precision and clarity. All his essays were brought out in two volumes entitled *Viyācapōtiṇi*. To imprint ideas on the scholar's mind, Chettiar wrote with emphasis wherever it was needed and with simplicity and clarity. Very few difficult words could be found in his writings. Some Sanskrit words were used in appropriate places.

Though Cōmacuntara Pāratyār (1879–1959 A.D.) was a lawyer by profession, he participated enthusiastically in the activities concerning the nation as well as the mother tongue, Tamil. He showed great care in safeguarding the interests of the Tamil language. He wrote an erudite commentary, from a new angle on some parts of the *Tolkāppiyam*. Two of his prose works, *Tacarataṇ Kuraiyum Kaikēyi Niraiyum* and *Cērar Tāyamurai* reveal his research ability and sound scholarship. His poetical work *Mārivāyil* depicts an imaginative episode based on the *Mahābhārata*, where a Pāṇḍya ruler's daughter sent an envoy to Arjuna. Pāratyār wrote many essays too.

Among those scholars who were skilled in classical literature as well as interested in modern literary genres, Vaiyāpurip Pillai (1891–1956 A.D.) was one. He spent his time in rendering yeoman service to Tamil, after giving up his profession as a lawyer. He was responsible for bringing out the monumental work of *Tamil Lexicon* before the turn of the first half of the twentieth century. Again, he performed the onerous duty of editing the entire *Caṅkam* classics. As a result of his patient research, Pillai published many research works, like *Ilakkiyac Cintanaikal*, *Ilakkiya Tīpam*, *Ilakkiya Utayam*, *Ilakkiya Maṇimālai* and *Ilakkiya Viḷakkam*. Though his conclusions may be controversial, the logical way in which his conclusions are arrived at, is commendable. Pillai's interest in modern genres like novel and short stories induced him to write a novel called *Rāji*, and a collection of short stories known as *Cirukatai Maṇjari*.



Like Vaiyapurip Pillai, R.P. Cetup Pillai (1896–1961 A.D.) also gave up his profession as a lawyer and emerged as a Tamil scholar. His eloquent literary speeches attracted scholars. With his oratorical gift, Pillai succeeded in drawing thousands of people to literary meetings. All his literary speeches abound in alliteration and assonance. Those speeches were loaded with choice quotations taken out from classical works. Even as Pillai's speeches were a delectable feast for listeners, his writings were a literary treat for readers. He wrote more than twenty-five prose works in a beautiful style. One of his outstanding research works is *Ūrum Pērum*.

Dr. A. Citamparanāta Chettiar (1907–1967 A.D.) utilised his extensive worldly knowledge for the cause of Tamil. He wrote many essays in a forceful, eloquent style. Among his many prose works, *Munpanikkālam*, *Tamilōcai* and *Tamiḷ Kāṭṭum Ulaku* are outstanding. He approached the subject matter in all his works directly and with clarity. His style was a refined one, interspersed with words drawn from classical works.

The old prose was written concisely using more literary words than those in common usage with alliteration and assonance. The Tamil term for prose is *urainātai*. It implies the style found in commentaries written on classical works. Much of the ancient commentators's style of writing, though known for brevity, profundity and erudition, was beyond the comprehension of the layman. Now the trend has changed with the realisation that the wealth of knowledge should be within easy reach of the many. This line of thinking gained impetus with the advent of printing press and mass education. Therefore a need arose to simplify the prose style so as to be easily understood by a large number of literates, who need not necessarily be scholars. Even the scholars themselves have now agreed that prose should be a simple medium to convey ideas directly and clearly. Modern poets like Pāratiyār went a step ahead and advocated in his preface to the minor-epic *Pāñcālī Capatam*, that the mechanics of poetry should be simplified. Another poet, Kavimani Tēcikavināyakam Pillai in one of his poems, *Pāratiyum Paṭṭikkāṭṭāṇum*, paid a glowing tribute to Pārati for composing his poems in a style which would enable the reader to understand their meaning at the very first reading. Yet another poet in his preface to *Pāñṭiyaṇ Paricu* mentioned that his aim was to enrich Tamil by writing in a simple and elegant language. When the greatest of modern poets advocates simplicity for poems, this need for prose

requires no special emphasis. Only research scholars now read difficult works for specific purposes. The modern Tamil prose style, therefore was the result of a gradual transformation that had been effected from the days of T.V. Kaliyāṇacuntaranar and U.V. Cāmināta Iyer. They helped to simplify the Tamil prose style similar to what Saint Rāmalīṅkar and Vētanāyakam Pillai had achieved in the realm of poetry. It was only with the development of simple prose, that newspapers and magazines were able to reach the masses. The Tamil scholar Kaliyāṇacuntaranār added another element—sweetness—to simplicity in writing prose. Likewise, Cāmināta Iyer, though soaked in ancient classics, wrote his literary experiences in newspapers and magazines in a simple and lucid style because he understood the need to write in that manner. Professor K. Namaccivāya Mudaliar also through his innumerable textbooks perpetuated that simple, lucid and mellifluous style in Tamil.

Professor K. Namaccivāya Mudaliar (1876–1931), wrote innumerable textbooks in simple Tamil for school children. Those who had studied Tamil in schools some forty years ago, would have invariably studied one of his books. He was teaching Tamil in some schools and later became the Professor of Tamil in the Madras Presidency College. He wrote two plays; one was on Kīcakaṇ, an epic character and the other on Pirutivirājaṇ, an historical figure. In addition he wrote the life stories of Janakaṇ and Tēciṅkurājaṇ. Tēciṅkurājaṇ was a chieftain of Gingee. He built a fortified fort at Gingee and defied the Carnatic Muslim rulers for a long time by sheer tactics and strength of arms. His heroism lives even today in Tamil folk songs. Tēciṅkurājaṇ's heroic life was immortalized in Mudaliar's book. Mudaliar also wrote a book of devotional poems entitled, *Taṇikai Tavappayanmālai*.

Many epics and *purāṇas* were written in Tamil soon after the tenth century, playing the sedulous ape to the literary trends in Sanskrit. In the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the Tamil language adopted certain new literary genres like the novel and the short story from western literature. Despite borrowing and adoptions, whatever was written in Tamil, never affected the normal growth of the language, but in general reflected the life-style and aspirations of the people. In short the Tamil language preserved its individuality. However it is undeniable that the new impact has affected the style of writing Tamil. The impact was

largely due to scientific improvements and its resultant emergence of mass media and communication systems. The cumulative effect of all these was greater awareness among the people and the phenomenal increase in the literacy rate. With education they learnt more about other cultures, values and life-styles. These cultural values slowly got assimilated into the traditional culture of the Tamil people. Of all the scientific inventions, printing machine has a tremendous impact on the Tamil language. After the advent of printing the habit of one person reading and many others listening ceased. Now-a-days besides books, everyone reads journals and magazines. When education has become mass-based, the need for reading materials written with simplicity, clarity and lucidity has arisen. All these have affected the Tamil language enormously. Poetry has yielded its pride of place to prose. Poetry has become simple. Tamil prose is simple and lucid in the absence of alliteration, assonance and pedantry. In modern prose difficult and archaic words are ruthlessly replaced by simple words in current use. Although literary words may occur in certain types of literary and critical papers, the style as such, has been gradually simplified. In the novel, the short story and the play, the archaic literary style has been totally rejected.

#### *T.V. Kaliyāṇacuntarar*

T.V. Kaliyāṇacuntarar (1883–1953 A.D.), who was essentially a Tamil scholar, started his career as a Tamil teacher, became famous as journalist, political leader, labour leader and a good mentor to budding writers. In his younger days, he followed the Tamil tradition implicitly. It is seen in the commentary which he wrote on the *Periyapurāṇam*. Later a transformation took place in his life in the light of experiences gained in various spheres of activity. His experiences as the editor of a Tamil daily, *Tēcabaktan* and a weekly *Navacakti*; as the speaker and chairman of social, religious and political meetings and conferences and the experiences he gained through association with scholars in different fields gave his writings maturity, clarity and refinement. This maturity and clarity could be found in his important prose work, *Maṇita Vāḷkkaiyum Kāntiyaṭikalum*, written in 1917. Another major work in prose *Murukan Allatu Alaku*, reveals the refined mind which had soaked itself in the ancient Tamil classics. Yet another work *Peṇṇiṇ Perumai* was written so as to bring about a new status and

prestige for the womenfolk in society. The prose style in all these works is majestic and mellifluous. Apart from the appealing style, one notices noble ideas in all his works. In the midst of writings which kindled strong likes and dislikes, passions, stubbornness, partiality, animal instincts and destructive attitudes, it was indeed a good fortune for the Tamil literary world that a noble soul like Kaliyāṇacuntaranār came forward to write many works impartially, without sacrificing high ideals and within the limits of the cultural milieu and with compassion. Some of his prose works like *Tamil Tenral*, were nothing but a collection of speeches, which he had delivered on various occasions and on different subjects. They could be regarded as oratorical literature. His editorials to newspaper and weekly were collected and brought out in the form of books like *Tamiḻ Cōlai*. Works of this nature may rightly be claimed as literature for their thought content, style and diction. Since Kaliyāṇacuntaranār was the first to publish his speeches and editorials in the form of books, they could be regarded as an innovation in Tamil. He wrote elaborate prefaces to many Tamil works. Everyone of them could be regarded as a literary piece, bound to live as literature. When requested for a preface to a book entitled *Mēṭait Tamiḻ* (Oratorical Tamil) he unexpectedly introduced a new technique in writing the preface to the book, intended to train people in rhetoric and oratory. This particular preface began as if Kaliyāṇacuntaranār was giving an oration. The preface began thus: "Comrades! I stand before you. Do you know the reason for doing so? I am going to give my preface to the work, *Mēṭait Tamiḻ*." Though Kaliyāṇacuntaranār came in the tradition of old Tamil scholars, he introduced many new techniques and innovations in the art of writing and speaking Tamil.

Since 1942, Kaliyāṇacuntaranār composed many poetical works. Some among them were written with the title *Aruḻ Vēṭṭal* (seeking the grace of God) following the tradition established by the hymns of Nāyaṇmārs and Ālvārs as well as Irāmaliṅkar's *Arutpā*. To this category of poetical works belong, Kaliyāṇacuntaranār's *Tirumāl Aruḻ Vēṭṭal*, *Murukaṇ Aruḻ Vēṭṭal*, and *Kiristu Aruḻ Vēṭṭal*. Other works of this type like *Putumai Vēṭṭal* and *Potumai Vēṭṭal* reveal Kaliyāṇacuntaranār's vision of an egalitarian state and a society free from caste and other inequalities. While



welcoming the new ideologies in these works, the author pays tribute to the good things in the old social order as well. In addition, these works reveal his revulsion against giant stride in technological civilisation and his natural love of the serenity in nature. Kaliyāṇacuntarar wrote in all fifteen poetical works in traditional metres. However, modernity could be seen in ideas and in emotion. He lived an ideal life of simplicity, purity and universality. These noble ideals are reflected more in his poetry than in prose. But it is difficult to say that all his verses have poetic qualities. There are verses among them that possess poetic features like imagination and emotion. Like the gospels of great souls, Kaliyāṇacuntarar's select compositions represent the quintessence of culture.

### Other Scholars

Among the scholars who have written the history of Tamil literature, the works of K. Cīnivāca Pillai, K. Cuppiramaṇiya Pillai and T.P. Mīnāṭcicuntaranar are very useful. Another scholar Cataciva Paṇtarattar utilised his research knowledge in inscriptions and clarity in history to write the most commendable work, *Ilakkiya Ārāycciyum Kalvetṭum*. Mayilai Cīnivēṅkatacāmi gave a clear account of the contributions made by Christians, Jains and Buddhists to Tamil literature in the following works, *Kiristavamum Tamilum*, *Camaṇamum Tamilum* and *Pautamum Tamilum* respectively. Pulavar Kōvintaṇ wrote many volumes about the kings and poets of the Caṅkam period. Through their research works, scholars like M. Irācamāṇikkam, Cāmicitamparanār, M. Aruṇācalam, M. Varadarajan, Veḷḷaivāraṇar, A.M. Paramacivānantam and Venkatarama Chettiyar gave precision, clarity and simplicity to Tamil prose. Other research scholars like Turai Araṅkacāmi, K. Appātturai, V.S. Māṇikkam and Irāmanātan Chettiyar adopted the prose style of medieval commentators.

T.P. Mīnāṭcicuntaranār's research work *Kāṇal Vari* was a departure from other research works on the *Cilappatikāram*. In this work he substantiated his view that the chapter *kāṇal vari* which appears in the first canto was the pivot on which the entire epic *Cilappatikāram* revolves. Mārkkapantu Sarma's *Cilampin Pāyiram*, and *Cilampum Maṇimēkalaiyum* were erudite research works on the twin epics *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*. Other scholars, who wrote excellent research works on the *Cilappatikāram*, were M.P. Civaṇāṇam (he spread the greatness of



Ilaṅkō, the author of *Cilappatikāram*, and earned the title “Cilampuc Celvar”), M. Varadarajan, P. Kurucāmi, N. Cañcīvi, K. Tirumēṇi and others.

T.K. Citamparanāta Mudaliar enjoyed the poems of *Kam-parāmāyaṇam* and wrote interesting research articles. Others who wrote research works on Kampan's *Rāmāyaṇa* were P. Sri, A. Cīnivācarākavaṇ, A.S. Nāṇacampantaṇ, K.V. Jakannātaṇ, Makarācaṇ Cuppu Reddiar, Rāmakiruṣṇaṇ and others.

Many research works, articles and papers were written on the *Tirukkural*. Scholars like Kaliyāṇacuntaranār, as well as poets like Nāmakkal Kaviñcar and Pāratitācaṇ published new and thought provoking commentaries. Noteworthy research works were written by T.P. Mīnāṭcicuṇṭaranār, M. Varadarajan and Kōtaṇṭapāṇi Pil-lai. K.A.P. Vicuvanātaṇ's interesting articles on the *Tirukkural* were published in three books.

Scholars like K.V. Jakannāthaṇ, T.P. Mīnāṭcicuntaranār, Ilakkuvaṇār, Vēṅkatarāma Chettiar, K. Rājavēlu, A.S. Nāṇacampantaṇ, M. Varadarajan, P. Kurucāmi and N. Cañcīvi researched into the Caṅkam anthologies, *Eṭṭuttokai* and *Pattuppāṭṭu* and brought out the intricate and interesting ideas found in them in their learned works. Likewise scholars like Paramacivāṇantam, Nāṇacampantaṇ, Nāṇamūrṭti, Pālacuppiramaṇiyaṇ and Vel-laivāraṇar wrote research articles; papers and books on the mediaeval epics and the Bhakti literature.

Writers like Pālacuppiramaṇiyaṇ, Kāmāṭci Ammaiyaṇ, Ārumukaṇār, Aṇpukaṇapati and Cīnivācaṇ wrote interesting articles on certain sections of ancient literature. Among the writers who have written articles on certain aspects of modern life, the writings of Cuki Cuppiramaṇiyam are worth mentioning.

Cālai Iṇantiraiyaṇ Kōvintacāmi, Vimalānantam, Virācāmi and others made a critical appraisal of the works of modern poets like Pāratiyār, Pāratitācaṇ and others, and brought out standard critical books.

It is praiseworthy that M.P. Civaṇāṇam has given a critical account of the growth of Tamil literature during the freedom struggle in an excellent research work.

Cōma. Le. has written many works analysing the topography, fertility, life-style and dialects of the people who live in various districts of Tamil Nadu. He has also written many interesting works

of his travel experiences in several countries of the world. M.C. Campantan has analysed in depth the topography and history of the city of Madras in a commendable work.

There are many books in Tamil, narrating travel experiences in foreign countries. Some among them have gained the status of literary works. Writers like A.M. Paramacivānantam, C. Cuppiramaṇyam, N.D. Cuntaravaṭivēlu, Maṇiyan and others have narrated their travel experiences interestingly in their works. Cōmu's *Akkaraic Cīmaiyl* is an eminent work of this type. A.K. Ceṭṭiyar's *Ulakam Curriya Tamilaṇ* and Cōma. Le.'s works are interestingly written. Mērimācilāmaṇi has set down her travel experiences in her book *Amerikkap Payaṇa Niṇaivu Alaika!* which have been received well by scholars.

Writers who explained rare ideas in the form of letters in their works, contributed much to the growth of Tamil literature. Works of this nature by Aṛiṇar Aṇṇādurai and M. Varadarajan became popular among the people. Arinar Annadurai analysed the greatness of the ancient Tamil country as well as made a critical appraisal of the modern political problems in his letters. These letters initially appeared in weeklies and later were collected and brought out in the form of books.

### Biography

For the past two centuries biographies have become as important genre in Tamil literature. The nineteenth century biographical work, *Vinōtaraca Maṇjari* gives an interesting account of the Tamil poets. There is more of fiction than of biography in that work. It is indeed a very fine art to write a biography without fictitious material. Va. Rā. wrote an interesting biography of poet Pāratiyār. U.V. Cāmināta Iyer wrote an excellent biography of his Tamil teacher, Mīṇāṭcicuntaram Pillai. It is now considered a part of literature, for its deft handling of the subject matter. It gives a mine of information about the Tamil scholars, who were the contemporaries of Mīṇāṭcicuntaram Pillai. Apart from this monumental work, Cāmināta Iyer wrote several other short biographies of famous men in different walks of life. Another scholar Cāmināta Carma also wrote several interesting biographies. The biographies of Leo Tolstoy, Lenin and Bernard Shaw were written by Tamil scholars. Maṛai Tirunāvukkaracu and K. Cantiracēkaraṇ wrote very penetrating biographies of their respective fathers. Patmanāpaṇ

and others wrote elaborate biographies about poet Pāratiyār. M.P. Civañāṇam brought to light the greatness of Kaṭṭapommaṇ and Citamparam Pillai, through his incisive biographies, *Vīrapāṇṭiyak Kaṭṭapommaṇ* and *Kappalōṭṭiya Tamiḷan*. Rakunātaṇ's *Putumaippittan Varalāru* gives a good account of Putumaippittan, the father of Tamil short stories. Other biographies like *Tamiḷtonṭar Vīramāmunivar* were written in a laudable manner. Vēṅkaṭācalam wrote the hagiography of Śaiva saints. Pammal Campanta Mudaliar in a biography entitled, *Yāṇ Kaṇṭa Pulavarkaḷ*, gave a good account of the Tamil poets and scholars who were his contemporaries.

To write an autobiography is indeed a very interesting creative art. Although there are very few autobiographies in Tamil, those few are excellent examples for others to follow. U.V. Cāmināta Iyer's autobiography, *En Carittiram* and T.V. Kaliyāṇacuntarar's *Vālkkai Kurippukkaḷ*, are masterpieces in the art of writing autobiographies in Tamil. Among the Tamil poets Nāmakkal Rāmaliṅkam Pillai has written his autobiography. Although Cāmināta Iyer's autobiography was left unfinished with 122 chapters, it is a remarkable work. T.V. Kaliyāṇacuntarar's autobiography is like an encyclopaedia giving information about scholars in various fields, great savants, even about some ordinary workers as well as political leaders.

### *Juvenile Books*

Now-a-days many books are being published in Tamil for children. Children evince great interest in new things, ideas and imaginative creations. They may not show any interest or learn anything, if materials are presented in an uninteresting way. Their mind receives only that knowledge which is given to them in an interestingly simple manner.

Many books have been published in recent years to improve the general knowledge and satisfy the inquisitiveness of children. It is commendable that most of the juvenile books are being written with imagination and in a style easily comprehensible by children. Among those who write for children mention must be made of T.J. Raṅkanātaṇ, Cuntaravaṭivelu, Pūvaṇṇaṇ, Teyvacikāmaṇi, Tampi Cīnivācaṇ and Vaittaṇṇā. Some write detective and horror stories too for children, although they are not suitable to them. They cannot be regarded in the strict sense as juvenile works. Interesting stories that have been popular among the people for

generations are simplified for children. Aḷa. Vaḷḷiyappā has collected interesting anecdotes from the lives of great men in their youth and brought them out in two interesting books under the caption *Periyōr Vālvilē* and *Cinṇaṇ Cīruvayatil*. These two books are written in an interesting style most suitable for children.

Even for adults it has become a necessity now-a-days to write in a comprehensible style without resorting to archaic words and complex syntactical structure. However there are no two opinions that the subject matter in a book, whether meant for adults or children, should be of such kind as to kindle noble emotions in their minds. This is what great scholars expect from books. Since publishing a book or an article has become so common that many posing as writers write on despicable matters in an attractive style. Useless and contemptible stuff has been presented as worthwhile reading material for spare hours in books and magazines. In this process books of little or no value get more popularity than those of genuine writers. In some respects the concept of writing in a simple and easily comprehensible style has in the hands of some writers been constantly misused. Extremists rather than those who write impartially carry the day by vigour of style and convincing manner of expression. As a result the simple and comprehensible style of writing has become a potent weapon in the hands of those who could sway the minds by passions rather than those who could write impartially. In the earlier days, the style of writing was the dividing line between scholars and commoners but now another element, the theme itself has been added to it. Amidst the struggle between quality and cheap writing, there are some writers who write on profound themes with a sense of proportion, believing in the ultimate triumph of truth. It is indeed heartening to note that even in the field of literary criticism, extremism has now given place to impartial and balanced expression of views.

## Modern Poetical Works

Even in the nineteenth century some poets lived by composing *ulā*, *maṭal* and *antāti* types of works in honour of patron philanthropists. As in the mediaeval period, poets showed greater interest in figures of speech than in emotion and imagination and satisfied themselves with play of words by writing *cilēṭai*, *yamakam* and *cittirakkavi* or ornamental poems. It was also the period when poets passed their time in deriving enjoyment from describing the feminine beauty and inciting the baser instincts in man. However, there were great men of letters like Rāmaliṅka Cuvāmikaḷ and Vētanāyakam Pillai; but their number was small. Pāratiyār, who was born in 1882 A.D. belonged to this category of illustrious poets. He not only abstained from composing eulogistic poems on the rich but criticized others for doing so. This brought the wrath of his patron Zamindar and as a result of it Pāratiyār had to leave the Zamin. His passion to maintain his liberty, pride in his talents, his desire to serve humanity and work for the political independence of the country made him different from most of his contemporaries. His friendship with V.V.S. Iyer, V.O. Citamparam Pillai and contact with Tilak strengthened Pāratiyār's conviction to devote his life to the service of the country. He composed patriotic poems and sung them with fervour, seated on the beach in Madras. His poems were printed and distributed far and wide, and they created an awakening among the people. Only through these patriotic poems Pāratiyār was known to the country till his death in 1921.



Pāratyār did not confine himself to the writing of patriotic poems alone. Other types of poems criticising social evils were also written. Yet some other poems condemned the caste system, opposed superstitions, encouraged the children, attacked the shameful treatment accorded to women as well as the undue importance given to English at the cost of the mother tongue. Poems of this nature are appreciated mostly for their emotional charm and appeal.

Pāratyār possessed an independent outlook from his younger days. He jealously guarded his personal liberty too. Though he lived in the company of the rich Zamindars and in the midst of poets who earned their living praising them, his mind was able to soar high and get itself interested in the struggle for political independence. When he became the editor of *Swadēsamitran*, a Tamil daily, Pāratyār was directly drawn into the freedom struggle. His writings were therefore profoundly influenced by the struggle for political independence. Such was their force and animation that the people were inflamed with passion for liberation. When he realised that his writings would create problems for *Swadēsamitran*, he resigned and started another paper *India* on his own. When there were widespread rumours that he would be arrested by the Government, Pāratyār retired to Pondicherry, one of the French enclaves in South India. There he cultivated the friendship of two great patriots, V.V.S. Iyer and Aurobindo. During Pāratyār's stay at Pondicherry, he composed many beautiful poems charged with patriotic feelings.

Though Pāratyār's poems were meant to arouse the people for political struggle in those days, many among them still excite noble emotions. The following poem, for example, even now kindles patriotism among the people when sung.

That name Bharat whoever mentions  
Eradicates poverty and vanquishes enemies.<sup>1</sup>

Pāratyār has sown in it many ideas that are now put forward for fostering unity in the country. He says in that poem that people would go boating on the river Sind on a moonlight with charming young girls from Kerala singing beautiful Telugu songs. Further, he hopes that the betel leaves grown on the banks of Kaveri would be bartered for the wheat grown on the Gangetic plains, that the

leonine Maharāshtrian poets would receive ivory tusks of Tamil Nadu as rewards for their poems; that suitable instruments would be installed at Kānchipuram to hear the discourses of the poets at the Banaras meet; that the Rajput heroes would be rewarded with gold obtained from Mysore. He suggests that by diverting the excess water of Ganges during the monsoon period to the dry central regions for purposes of irrigation, floods in Bengal should be averted. He cherished such hopes as these in his heart. Pāratiyār composed another patriotic poem with the caption *Eṅkaḷ Tāy* (Our Mother) in the rhyme of *Kāvaṭiccintu* verses so commonly sung on festive occasions at Murukan temples in Tamil Nadu. The feelings of patriotism and national unity are emphasised in the following poem:

When was my mother born?  
 None can tell  
 Not even those that perceive the past  
 Such is her greatness.  
 Thirty crores of faces has she  
 yet one only is her soul  
 Eighteen languages possesses she  
 Yet one only is her thought.  
 With hands of sixty crores  
 Charity performs she  
 (Those very hands)  
 Pulverise those enemies  
 That attempt to exploit her  
 On righteous Kings showers she  
 Blessings and many an act of kindness.  
 The unrighteous ones gulps she  
 And executes the dance of bliss.<sup>2</sup>

Pāratiyār has translated Bankim Chandra Chatterji's verse, *Vandēmātaram*, into Tamil in two different poems.

As Pāratiyār has conveyed and visualised India as one political whole and paid tribute to her greatness, so its part Tamil Nadu is also praised by him in a famous poem entitled, *Centamiḷ Nāṭu*. The following lines taken from that poem have captured the minds of boys girls in Tamil Nadu.

As soon as Centamiḷ Nāṭu is mentioned  
 There flows into our ears nectar sweet

As soon as Tantaiyar Nāṭu is uttered  
There surges up a power in our souls.<sup>3</sup>

In the original, assonance is skilfully used to kindle emotion. Pāratiyār's poems which depict the greatness of Tamil has been remembered and sung on all the public platforms in Tamil Nadu even today. At a time when the Tamils were under the spell of the English language, Pāratiyār aroused their consciousness to the greatness of their mother tongue. His services to Tamil language in this respect are without a parallel.

Pāratiyār who had praised the ancient greatness of India and its soul-enriching cultural traditions, never failed to condemn the present day uncivilised manners and superstitious beliefs of the people. There are many poems which condemn the defects among the Tamils vehemently. The following poem composed in the style of *Nonṭiccintu* verses is a good example.

Uncontrollable are my feelings  
To think of men, fallen from man's estate  
Their division—one crore?  
Too numerous to count.  
“It's a five-headed snake,” says father,  
“It's a six-headed one,” son avers  
Differences arise between father and son  
Years to come  
Both will remain as enemies.  
Sastras they may not consult any  
But believing in false ones  
Let him be of the same family  
Differed but on principles  
Will contemptuously be denigrated.<sup>4</sup>

In the following remarkable verse, Pāratiyār totally rejects the old social order with scorn.

Many castes you many enumerate  
But for them no fixed rules  
Morals many you may preach  
But before money you prostrate—Go, Go, Go.<sup>5</sup>

Yet in another equally interesting verse, he warmly welcomes the new social order. The verse runs thus:

You with sparkling eyes  
With determined heart  
With clarity of mind  
Will be incensed at poverty—Come, Come, Come <sup>6</sup>

Pāratiyār likes to see a society established without any economic disparity among people. His longing finds expression in the form of a poem charged with emotion.

Will the habit ever exist  
Where man grabs man's food?  
Will there ever be a life  
Where man looks on man's suffering?  
In this world  
Will there ever be such a life?  
Among us  
Will there ever be such a life?  
Let us formulate a rule henceforth  
For ever let us uphold it:  
If there is no food for anyone  
Let us destroy this world.  
We all belong to one family, one race  
We are all Indians.  
Equal status we hold  
Same prestige we all enjoy  
We are Kings of this land  
And Kings of this land we are  
Yes, we are the Kings.<sup>7</sup>

In another poem captioned, *Viṭutalai* (Freedom) Pāratiyār brings out his concept of freedom. According to him freedom means both political and economic freedom of the people.

In human race  
No one is poor  
None is a slave  
In India  
No one is despicable  
With education and wealth  
All happily mingle

As men of status  
And live with equality.<sup>8</sup>

Pāratiyār's *Cutantarap Paḷlu*, is modelled on a folk song sung by farmers. They are known as *Paḷluppāṭṭu*. In this type of poems also, he emphasises the necessity of equality among human beings. The following poem welcomes equality among various sections of people.

Gone are the days  
When people addressed Brahmins as Iyers  
Gone are the days  
When people addressed Europeans as *Turais*  
Gone are the days  
When people did obeisance to the rulers  
Gone are the days  
When people went on errands for the cheats  
Let us all worship  
Agriculture as well as industry  
And condemn the slothful  
Who merely live to eat and enjoy.<sup>9</sup>

Pāratiyār wrote several poems arousing the patriotism of the people. There is a lengthy poem which is an imaginative exhortation of Shivaji kindling the spirit of his soldiers. Another poem on Gopalakrishna Gokhale is written, employing the tune in Irāmaliṅka Cuvāmikaḷ's poem. Some poems which could enkindle patriotism were also written analogous to Kopalakiruşṇa Pārati's *Nantanār Kūrttaṇaikaḷ*. Since Pāratiyār gave evidence in favour of his friend Citamparam Pillai, he heard the arguments that ensued between the Judge and Pillai. The following verses give the spirit of that argument.

Will we die  
In our own country  
Rendering service to foreigners?  
Never will we fear.  
In any other country  
These injustices  
Would never be tolerated  
Would God look on it helplessly?



*Vantēmātaram*, that magic word  
 Till our last breath  
 We will repeat  
 And bowing our heads,  
 We will praise our mother.  
 Is it an infamy?  
 Is it a disgrace?  
 Would you ever succeed  
 If you butcher me?  
 Would my spirit ever die?  
 Would ever the inner force vanish?  
 Would ever the determination die?<sup>10</sup>

Pāratīyār composed some poems depicting the greatness of national leaders like Guru Govind, Lālā Lajpat Rāi, Dadabhai Naoroji and Bāl Gangādhār Tilak. His unfeigned admiration for Tilak is well known to the Tamils. He was the first poet to perceive the greatness in Mahatma Gandhi and to understand his concept of *ahimsa*. Gandhiji was praised by him as a venerable soul who spiritualized politics and rejuvenated the country. Even before the country could understand the Gandhian path it was Pāratīyār who paid a glorious tribute to its purity and effectiveness.

*Kuṭukuṭuppaikkāraṇ* or *Kōṇaṅki* is a gypsy, with a primitive musical instrument in hand that visits the houses in the early hours of the day predicting the future of the inmates. Usually the prediction will be made in the form of a folk-song with the background music produced by the instrument. Pāratīyār found and appreciated the form, rhythm, and tune of this folk-song. On this model he himself composed a poem with the title *Putiya Kōṇaṅki*, in which he expressed many ideas concerning the progress of the country. This type of a poetry is Pāratīyār's contribution to Tamil prosody.

Gudu Gudu Gudu Gudu  
 Favourable time approaching  
 Favourable time approaching  
 Poverty departing  
 Wealth arriving  
 Education increasing  
 Sins dissolving  
 Woe unto the educated  
 Woe unto the educated

That are crooked and sinful

Shastras increasing

Castes decreasing

Eyes opening

Justice appearing

Superstitions of yore

Disappear soon

Heroism dawns

Greatness is bestowed

Oh Sakti! Oh Bhagavati

Pronounce this

Righteousness grows

Righteousness grows.<sup>11</sup>

Pāratiyar appreciated the values enshrined in the ancient culture. Noble truths found in *Upanishads*, *purāṇas*, and epics were explained in his essays. He was moved by Pāñcālī's grief as well as heroism as revealed in the *Mahābhārata*. At the same time he was able to see the unique similarity between Pāñcālī's and Bhārat-mātā both in grief and the struggle for political freedom. Visualising this similarity, he composed a minor epic entitled *Pāñcālī Capatam*. He heard the preachings of Sister Nivedita, the disciple of Swami Vivekananda, and acknowledged her as his *guru*. Probably due to her teachings, Pāratiyar was able to understand and appreciate the true principles of Swami Vivekananda. Pāratiyar worshipped Shakti and composed many poems of devotional theism. He composed also philosophical and mystical ones embodying the quintessence of Vēdantic Philosophy. Even in such poems he expressed his great desire for the progress and well-being of the country and the world. Some of his philosophical poems like *Anpēcivam* and *Paraciva Veḷḷam* are unique for their clarity of thought and expression. He wrote about Kaṇṇaṇ (Kriṣṇa) from different angles, as his child, servant, friend, father, teacher and lover in several poems. Likewise, Kaṇṇammā was depicted as his lady love, mother, and a playful child. Periyalvar's imaginations and the cult of *bhakti* as revealed in the hymns of other Ālvārs were beautifully blended with a new lustre in Pāratiyar's poems on Kaṇṇaṇ.

Some of Pāratiyar's poems like *Vināyakar Nānmaṇi Mālai* and *Tacāṅkam* were composed conforming to the old Tamil poetical tradition. However, in some places the contents possess a novelty.

Pāratīyar's devotional poems, composed in straightforward and clear style, kindle lofty emotions. His poems relating Sakti worship create a new awakening among the people. If the poem concerning the cosmic dance, *Ūlīkkūttu*, is recited with emotion one can have the feeling of witnessing the annihilating dance of Kālī. His universal outlook is revealed in the devotional poems on Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammad.

Pāratīyar's philosophical poems *Nāṇappāṭalkaḷ*, are avidly read even to this day. The following poem is composed in a tune similar to the one sung by mendicants while begging in residential areas. It is written in a majestic style.

- No fear, no fear  
Absolutely no fear  
If the whole world  
stands against me  
No fear, no fear  
Absolutely no fear.<sup>12</sup>

Pāratīyār's minor epic *Pāñcālī Capatam* is written in *viruttam* and *cintu*. Some of the verses in this epic belong to the category of folk songs like the *noṇṭiccintu*. In fact he gives a new life and status to the *noṇṭiccintu* type of verses by proving that they express emotions in a telling manner. This is made possible by the simplicity of the verses. While narrating the gambling scene, where Dharma loses the sovereignty of the country to Sakuni, Pāratīyār does not view it as an incident in the epic but as the loss of the very freedom of India.

He digresses from the story to moralize upon the whole issue. In disgust he says, it is a grave injustice to lose the freedom of a country in a gamble without ever taking note of the people's feelings and treating them as mere beasts. His indignation comes out on the crest of waves of spectacular similes such as are rarely found in Tamil literary history.

Like the temple priest who sells  
The idol he worships—  
Like the watchman who gambles  
The home he guards—  
An adept in myriads of rules  
Taruman gambles away the country  
Fie upon the ignoble deed!

Kings don't regard others as humans  
But merely a herd of beasts  
Books of codes many may be cited  
Rules for the kings to govern the country  
Have not been properly evolved.<sup>13</sup>

While narrating the epic story, Pāratiyār is tormented by the mistakes committed by the rulers of various countries in the world today.

Nowhere exists in the world  
The system of governing a country  
Without any partisan attitude  
Without uprooting foundations of Dharma  
Without compromising cherished principles  
Without plunging others in distress.  
To discuss any further is futile.  
Let us narrate the story.<sup>14</sup>

When Draupadi is gambled away in the story, Pāratiyār grows indignant. In this particular episode of the epic he sees the grief of Mother India under subjection. Therefore, he flares up at the atrocity perpetrated in the name of sport.

As if  
Placing a sacrificial offering before a cur  
Renting out a gorgeous bungalow to a ghost  
Adorning an owl with a gold jewel  
obtained by selling a person  
None to question there  
Made the goddess of their life—Draupadi—a slave  
To such disreputable men.  
Who would kill a beloved baby  
To obtain leather for making slipper?  
Is divine Pāñcālī an appropriate bet  
For this bewitching gamble?<sup>15</sup>

When Pāṇḍavas lose in the game of chance, Duryodhana orders one of his brothers to bring Pāñcālī to the royal court. Dutshadana dragged her to the court seizing her by the hair. At this point Pāratiyār breaks in on the story, to rebuke the people of Hastinapura for looking on at the incident without beating up Dutshadana and relieving Draupadi of her grief.

Hopelessly she cried, listless  
 Pāṇḍavas' wife  
 Draupadi was dragged along  
 The hand, clutching her lengthy hair  
 He walked in front  
 People merely looked on  
 All along the way  
 What callous people!  
 Cowardly dogs!  
 Without trampling the prince in the dust  
 Freeing her from his clutches  
 And restoring her to the private chamber  
 Like trees people stood  
 And shed crocodile tears—  
 • Woman's tears—  
 Would they be of any use?<sup>16</sup>

The foregoing lines bring out Pāratiyār's anger at those who having been a party to the enslavement of the country engage themselves in idle platitudes without ever attempting to free it. What sort of determination people should possess to free the country is reflected in the vows made by the five Pāṇḍava brothers and their wife Pāñcālī towards the end of the epic.

For some of the verses in the epic Pāratiyār himself has given the tune, perhaps after trying it out, and also the reasons for so doing. The popular tune is as follows:

Lālala lālala Lālala—lala  
 Lāla lālala lālalā.

“The reader himself will know if he tried it that this tune is eminently suitable for highlighting the true effects of conversation and other aspects in the epic.” Dwelling on his point further, Pāratiyār says “the gypsy woman's tune for the song—‘māyak-kāraṇammā—Kiruṣṇaṇ—makuṭikkāraṇammā’—while begging and at the same time selling needles and beads is remarkably suited for describing the gambling scene.” These notes indicate his appreciation even of the gypsy songs and his undoubted ability to give them a literary form. His introduction to *Pāñcālī Capatam*, indicates, how Pāratiyār aspires to write in a simple and intelligible style for the common man. “In the modern period one who writes



an epic in simple style, easily understandable rhythm and a tune liked by the common people, gives a new life to our mother tongue. Besides writing for the common man, the epic should be written without sacrificing its literary merits. Since Parasakti, who has determined to give a new life to the Tamil community, has induced me to write the epic, I expect its style will please our people."

The long poem, *Kuyil Pāṭṭu*, is a repository of imagination. It is a novel poetic composition on the theme of love. The poet himself is the hero of the poem and his lady-love happens to be the bird of song, *kuyil*. The *kuyil* is in its natural habitat in the midst of a mango grove. Its sweet voice spreads all over the grove like a flash of lightning. Forgetting the mundane world the poet begins to dream.

Like mingling ambrosia  
 everywhere with breeze  
 Like lightning spreading  
 everywhere its beauty  
 Like the nymphs of heaven  
 everywhere spreading their charm  
 The enchanting poem  
 everywhere exhibiting its magic  
 I pondered over it  
 It enchanted me  
 I lost my consciousness  
 And slipped into day-dreaming  
 In that lengthy dream  
 I witnessed this.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the *Kuyil Pāṭṭu* begins with the poet's reverie. The *kuyil*'s sweet music has enchanted the poet so much that he craves to become a *kuyil*. He falls in love with the *kuyil* and loves to live with it. He likes to sacrifice his life in the fire of love created by its music. In the poet's dream, the *kuyil* tells the events that had occurred in its previous birth. After narrating all its story the *kuyil* falls into the hands of the poet. He gives a loving kiss to the bird. Then it disappears and in its place stands a beautiful dame. The poet is stunned and exclaims, "How can I describe her beauty in Tamil." However, he tries to picture her ravishing beauty in words. The juice squeezed out of the poetic fruit is mixed with the essence of fine arts like music and dance and the nectar and made solid by

the sun of five From this solid, her body is figured out. Soon the poet awakes from the dream and sees around with utter astonishment.

After awakening from the dream  
All around I saw  
Old books, pencil, heaps of newspapers and  
an old mat  
All in a sequence, typical of a house  
Only then I realised  
'I am at home.'<sup>18</sup>

In the foregoing lines the poet points out an old mat as a symbol of his poverty. The *Kuyil Song* is a highly imaginative poem.

Pāratyār's reformist zeal and revolutionary mind were revealed in his personal life. While living at Pondicherry, he was friendly to a Harijan and treated him as his relative. One fine morning Pāratyār invested him with a sacred thread and elevated him to the status of a Brahmin. This reformist zeal is uncovered in his poetic compositions too. In a poem for children, for example, he says;

Oh dear child  
There exists no castes.  
To speak of  
High and low  
Is a crime.<sup>19</sup>

Pāratyār's ideas and imaginative pen portraits can be seen in his prose writings. They resemble more poetic prose. He wrote hundreds of essays for the newspapers he edited. Many of these essays possess the quality of durability as literary pieces. He appeals to Kalaimakal, the Goddess of learning, for certain gifts essential to a poet.

To perceive clearly  
To explain with clarity  
To provide happy dreams  
To those who think  
And fill their hearts with bliss  
To move them to tears  
Are not all these your blessings?  
Oh! the goddess of muse  
Bestow these gifts on me.<sup>20</sup>

He did obtain all these gifts from her. Both his poems and prose writings reveal that he had clear perception of men and matters, possessed the unique capacity to explain them with clarity and the quality to touch the hearts of readers with joy. In all his essays one can witness emotion, clarity, force and high ideals. His translations are of very high order. Some of Tagore's short stories and the *Bhagavad Gita* were translated into Tamil in an appealing style. Since Pāratiyār happened to be a gifted writer, he was able to give a new brilliance to the fields in which he himself gained pre-eminence.

### *Pāratitācaṇ*

Another famous poet, next in importance to Pāratiyār, was Pāratitācaṇ (1891-1964). His given name was Kaṇaka Cuppurattiṇam, but came to be known popularly as Puratcik Kaviṇar or revolutionary poet. While Pāratiyār was in Pondicherry for political reasons, Pāratitācaṇ was able to move with him and gain his appreciation for his talent as a poet. As a result of his reverence and appreciation for Pāratiyār, Kaṇaka Cuppurattiṇam assumed the pseudonym Pāratitācaṇ and came to be known as such by everyone in Tamil Nadu. He began his career as a Tamil teacher and edited some magazines too. He was associated with political parties and the cinema field. For his versatility, he won a place in the hearts to the Tamils only as a "revolutionary poet."

There is an appealing rhythm in his poems. Pāratitācaṇ expresses his ideas forcefully in enchanting rhythms. The words though simple, gain enormous power and emphasis when he uses them in poems. He follows the traditional prosody in writing many of his poems. He also utilises *cintu* and other types of versifications so common to folk songs. Even film tunes are used in some of his poems. Besides these, he has composed many modern poems too.

Pāratitācaṇ has written an interesting poem in a tune commonly sung at a time when the rope dancer walks from one end of the pole to another on a tight rope. This we find published in *Kuyil*, a mere rhythm which reminds the readers of the rhythm of the rope dancer. The mere words of the poem can be enjoyed for the way they dance to the rhythm. At the same we can know Pāratitācaṇ's eagerness to give a new life to the Tamil society. According to him the society is a mere skeleton without flesh or

life. He attempts to give a new life to that skeleton by strengthening it with a medicine. A section of the poem runs thus:

Tītutitum Tītutitum Tītutitum Tītutitum  
 Tītutitum Tītutitum Tītutitum Tītutitum  
 To everyone, my greetings  
 In a line all be seated  
 Oh you maharajas  
 Given birth to children . . . .  
 Ye younger brother  
 Ye elder brother  
 The skeleton,  
 Look, my brother  
 No flesh; no life  
 Yes, Yes, tītutitum  
 What is its name?  
 What is the name of this medicine?  
 Inside if it touches  
 Gives mirth to life  
 It is pure Tamil, Oh brother  
 This is pure Tamil  
 On this skeleton  
 I smear  
 This medicine  
 Beat the drum  
 Tītutitum Tītutitum Tītutitum Tītutitum  
 Look at it  
 The Tamil skeleton laughs  
 Look at it  
 Has gained a new spirit  
 The ruined Tamil Nadu  
 Look at it  
 Now in joy it sings  
 Oh mother, Oh father  
 Neither it's a jugglery  
 Nor it's a mantra  
 We should ponder over  
 And find a way  
 To ease our difficulties.<sup>21</sup>

Through innumerable poems of this nature Pāratitācaṇ kindles the spirit of Tamils for their languages and country. Some of the

poems of this category have been compiled in the form of a book, entitled *Tamil Iyakkam*.

In many poems one can see the eagerness of Pāratitācaṇ to welcome new ideologies. He also welcomes and composes songs on the importance and role of workers. In the following verses he addresses parks, rice-fields and tanks filled with lotus flowers. "Are not the workers responsible for your present form, enriching and beautifying you all?"

Oh beautiful parks  
Before clearing and beautifying  
How many comrades  
Did shed blood  
To the roots of trees

Oh paddy fields  
Due to constant weeding  
Has yielded paddy a plenty  
How many did sweat  
To make you fertile?

Oh tanks with blooming lotus,  
While digging  
Under the pile of earth  
How many did you bury?  
That story, relate to the world.<sup>22</sup>

From dawn to dusk workers toiled to lay highways and large factories. In his poems, Pāratitācaṇ apostrophizes highways and factories and wants them to tell the real story of their emergence into the world. Finally he addresses the world, "Oh world! Are you not the witness to the workers, hard labour? Rich people live without realizing these facts. Is it fair?"

Are you not the witness?  
Oh world!  
To the workers' toil  
If they plead, 'sataisfy our hunger'  
'Your life will go', reply the rich.  
Is it justice?<sup>23</sup>

The poet further says, "the time has changed. Henceforth the workers will not cringe and fawn before the rich; they have lost their fear."



Shedding their fear  
They will arise  
No more cringing  
No more fawning  
Strength they have  
Happy life they will possess  
Never this prophecy will fail.<sup>24</sup>

Finally the poet says, "we will destroy the decaying old order and in its place will establish a new world order."

A new world  
Let us all establish.  
The useless' strife-torn world  
Let us uproot.<sup>25</sup>

In one of his minor epics, *Pāṇṭiyaṇ Parisu*, Pāratitācaṇ imagines a brave new world. In that new world no superstitions will find a place.

On the march is the world  
To a brave new world  
Everyone there will have everything  
Illiterates there will be none; if nay,  
Those that failed to teach  
Will be impaled.  
In that brave new world  
Everyone will be virtuous  
Let all superstitions be destroyed  
What if they are destroyed.<sup>26</sup>

Pāratitācaṇ harps on the theme, labour and capital, or rich and poor, in yet another poem captioned *Cāynta Tarācu*. According to him many in this world are poor, having a begging bowl in their hands. Only a few are rich. If the poor become aggressive, the imbalance between the rich and the poor will be corrected. This particular poem is noted for its power-packed words and rhythm.

On a similar theme, there is another poem, *Talai Aru*, which is noted for its power of imagination. In this poem the workers are compared to an ocean and those who enjoy the fruits of their labour are compared to boats. "If the hurricane hits, what will be the fate of the boats? Before such a hurricane is formed, the rich should realise their true position and behave accordingly."

Pāratitācaṇ attacked with vehemence all superstitious ideas customs and manners. He virulently attacked the evils of caste system. With great dismay he said, "the world is in a room filled with darkness. It is indeed astonishing that there exist persons who acknowledge the existence of caste." His reformist zeal is revealed in his cradle songs too.

Like a box of camphor  
Strong smell you spread  
To dispel superstition  
The foul smell, that fills the forest  
Like a lamp you appear  
To brighten up  
The useless darkness of  
The caste<sup>27</sup>

The above mentioned cradle song is intended for female children. He has also composed similar ones for male children. Even there he deprecates superstitious beliefs. In the following verse Pāratitācaṇ compares the superstitious people to cattle. He speaks of the child as born to subdue and reform them.

If we say  
Superstitious practices  
Make actions tiring  
Make life useless  
Like cattle  
They butt you  
Oh ye child  
With tender shoulders  
You were born  
To domesticate  
To harness  
Those cattle.  
Oh ye child  
With incomparable shoulders  
Sleep, sleep.<sup>28</sup>

Pāratitācaṇ has criticised old customs and beliefs in his poetical dramas. An atheist, he opposes old religious beliefs also.

The first collection of poems entitled *Pāratitācaṇ Kavitaikaḷ*, is modelled on Pāratiyār's poems. The poems in this collection depict excellent emotions and high ideals. One can perceive his

broad vision which views the entire world as one family. A short epic, *Cañcīvi Parvatattin Cāral* is included in the first anthology of Pāratitācaṇ's poems. Other minor epics like, *Pāṇṭiyaṇ Parisu*, *Tamiḷacciyaṇ Katti*, *Vīrattāy*, *Etīrpārāta Muttam* and *Kātalā Kaṭamaiyā* illustrate his passionate interest in Tamil.

Both *Kuṭumpa Viḷakku* and *Iruṇṭa Viṭu* are marvellous literary compositions of very high order. The former work reveals the poet's joy in witnessing a happy family life. The latter work depicts certain imaginative incidents which will mar that happy life. Both the works are highly realistic.

Another collection *Aḷakiṇ Cirippu*, contains poems that lend beauty to Tamil literature. Those poems essentially describe the beauty of nature. They are unequalled among the Tamil poems that touch upon the ravishing beauty of nature. In the following poem, Pāratitācaṇ recounts the places where the lady of beauty dances.

She resides in the brightness of children's eyes  
She laughs in the light of lamps  
She dances in the fingers that thread flowers  
She expresses happiness in the farmer's gait  
While carrying a plough on his shoulder  
She has arrested my attention  
With that yellow colour of a fully grown paddy field  
And has given happiness after filling my heart.<sup>29</sup>

Even while describing the beauty, Pāratitācaṇ does not forget the toiling farmer. In his majestic gait, with the plough slung over his shoulder, he sees beauty revealed in all its charm.

Pāratitācaṇ possesses an universal outlook, despite his enthusiastic treatment of themes like Tamil language, Tamil Nadu and Tamil society. In that universal vision, countries become small boundaries. According to the poet, the consciousness of universal brotherhood should grow more and more in every man. With this idea man must comprehend the extended society of his own kind.

Join one country with another  
And then go beyond them too  
Reach the pinnacle of a mountain  
That reaches the sky  
Never halt

Go beyond that also  
 Then scan everywhere  
 Behold everywhere the humans of this universe  
 Behold your own kind  
 Behold the army of your beings  
 See the ocean of human beings  
 Overwhelmed with joy  
 Shout "I belong to the sea of humanity."<sup>30</sup>

Pāratitācaṇ's universal vision is expressed in the foregoing poem with emotion and in simple, power-packed words.

Pāratitācaṇ's poetic style, like his mind, is very forceful. He gives force and expression to the words he uses in his poems, although they are plain and simple. He never knows how to tell things without emotion. If he hates anything, he hates intensely. And if he blames anybody, he blames him with all his force. His attacks are more telling than those of sword. Though his poems are forceful, ruthless and skilful, they are written in traditional type of verses or the simple *cintu* or the two line *kaṇṇi* verses. It is indeed remarkable on the part of Pāratitācaṇ to use these simple poetic forms as a vehicle to convey his fiery emotions.

Pāratitācaṇ has written several enchanting and scintillating songs largely on the theme of human love and they are specifically meant for the world of music. These poems possess an excellent form.

### *Tēcikavināyakam Pillai*

Kavimaṇi Tēcikavināyakam Pillai's (1876–1954 A.D.) poems were written both on traditional and modern lines. They reflected largely his personal qualities of simplicity, tranquillity and refinement. It is amazing that though he lived at a time of great political unrest and turmoil, he was able to compose poems in a mild and pleasing manner. He was adept in writing *veṇpā* type of verses in an artless, direct and convincing style. He was progressive in his outlook too. Since he has given those revolutionary ideas in simple and sweet verses they settle gently on the reader's mind. One such thought-provoking poem is *Kōyil Valipātu* or temple worship.

Seen all over the temple  
 Seen from the Kōpuram too

Despite my careful search  
 Oh maid  
 Have not seen the God of gods  
 Have seen the sculptured statues  
 Have seen the beautiful arts of artists  
 Despite my searching look  
 Oh maid,  
 Have not seen that miraculous image  
 Have seen the burning of incense  
 Have seen the waving of camphor light  
 Despite my thorough search  
 Oh maid,  
 Have not seen the saviour  
 Oh maid!  
 Seeing beautiful things  
 Allowing mind to roam about  
 Worshipping without concentration  
 Serves no purpose.  
 Oh maid!  
 Within you He is  
 If seen within,  
 You will see Him too  
 Inside the temple.<sup>31</sup>

Beside such philosophical poems in modern style, he has written poems in the traditional manner also like *Aḷakammai Viruttam* and others.

Tēcikavināyakam Pillai translated Edwin Arnold's English work, *Light of Asia* into Tamil under the caption *Āciya Jōti*, in a mellifluous style. The work by the very nature of its composition resembles more an original work than a translated one. The following verses depict the deep sorrow of mother who with her dead son approaches Buddha with an appeal to bring him back to life.

Oh Lord Buddha!  
 My feelings of a mother  
 Are rudely shaken  
 No other child have I  
 No other relatives have I  
 Show mercy to me  
 At the sight of my dead child



Without giving sweet kisses  
 Without its artless prattles  
 My mind shudders  
 Without looking up and talking  
 Without sucking the milk  
 My mind cannot bear  
 The sight of my child  
 Proud of place I lost  
 As the mother of a child  
 Like a ghost will I stand  
 With a dead child in hand.<sup>32</sup>

Edward Fitzgerald translated the quatrains of Omar Khayyam, the Persian mathematician and poet of the eleventh century, into English in 1859. Tēcikavināyakam Pillai translated the English version into Tamil under the title *Umārkayām Pātalkaḷ*. This work could be regarded a transmutation of a transmutation rather than a translation. Therefore Pillai took liberties and composed poems suitable to the surroundings of the Tamil country. In these poems the well known Tamil philanthropist, pāri of Caṅkam fame, and the poet Kampar, appear at appropriate places. As a result, it appears to be original with all the literary eminence of a Tamil work. The following verse, for example, gives the impression of reading some of the beautiful poems of the Tamil country.

Against the sun's scorching heat  
 Lovely shade is there  
 Cool breeze is there  
 In hand, to read and enjoy  
 Poems of Kampan are there  
 Goblets of wine are there  
 Many hymns are there  
 You are there to sing,  
 With understanding  
 Apart from these luxuries  
 Does the world bestow  
 Any other paradise  
 Worth living?<sup>33</sup>

Tēcikavināyakam Pillai has given translation of certain English poems also in enchanting Tamil verses.

Following the footsteps of Pāratiyār, Pillai has also utilised

some of the forms or tunes of folk songs in composing his poems. Based on popular folk songs like *Āṇṭippaṇṭāram*, *Unai Vēṇṭik Koṇṭēṇē* and *Niṇaippatu Eppōtu Neñcē*, Pillai has written poems like *Tiṇṭātār Viṇṇappam*. It expresses his grief over the pitiable conditions of outcastes. Some other verses are also written on the pattern of *āṇantakkaḷippu*.

Tēcikavināyakam Pillai has great respect for the poetic talents of Pāratiyār. Pillai has composed a highly imaginative and at the same time witty poem, in which, a villager on his return from a visit to a town relates to his folks his reactions on hearing Pāratiyār's songs. Some of the verses are as follows:

- . Composition of poem—  
 Pāratī is the poet  
 His songs I heard  
 Sung in appropriate tunes  
 Intoxicated I am  
 Bear with my blabber  
 Said in stupor  
  
 The beauty of usage increases  
 With every word  
 Emotions build up  
 Like skippings of lambs  
 With every poem  
 Stones dissolve, and  
 Transform into poems.  
 With rapt attention  
 Calves listen  
 Without sucking milk  
  
 Clarity of mind  
 Gives one poem  
 Another gives courage  
 Another intoxicates  
 Yet another moves one to tears.<sup>34</sup>

The poem, conceived in a lighter vein offers a good appraisal of Pāratiyār's poems.

Tēcikavināyakam Pillai's *Nāñcil Nāṭṭu Marumakkaḷvali Māṇmiyam*, portrays the customs and manners of people living in Kanyakumari district. This work is an excellent example of his humour and progressive outlook. He has also composed many

*kīrtanas* meant specifically for concerts. He has done some research into history and inscriptions. Some of his findings are given in the form of articles and books.

### *Nāmakkal Kaviṇar*

In olden days, poems were composed largely in honour of kings and patron philanthropists. In the mediaeval period, besides kings and patrons, poems were composed on various deities in shrines. On western influence national anthems as well as musical compositions in honour of the mother tongue were written. Cuntaram Pillai in his poetical play, *Maṇōṇmaṇiyam*, composed a prefatory poem in which he deified the Tamil language. This poem is popular among the Tamils, even to this day. Likewise the national poet, Pāratiyār composed several poems in honour of India, Tamil Nadu and the Tamil language. These poems have been responsible even today for kindling patriotism and love for the mother tongue. Following Pāratiyār's example, Pāratitācaṇ wrote several poems on these themes. A collection of poems portraying his love for Tamil is found in the work, *Tamiḷ Iyakkam*. Nāmakkal Kaviṇar too implicitly followed this tradition. His poetical work, *Tamiḷaṇ Itayam*, contains verses glorifying Tamils and kindling the feeling of comradeship among them as an ethnic group.

Nāmakkal Kaviṇar Rāmalīṅkam Pillai wrote an interesting epic, *Avaḷum Avaṇum*, in a simple and elegant style. Two other works, *Caṅkōli* and *Tamiḷ Tēr* contained many good poems on various themes. However, it was the poems in *Kānti Aṅcali* that brought him great fame. At the time of Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha, Nāmakallār composed the following poem, urging the Tamils to join the Gandhian movement and it won for him a place in the hearts of the people.

A battle comes  
Without the use of sword  
Without the shedding of blood  
Join that war  
All those, who  
Believe in the immanence of truth  
The personification of calmness  
Gandhi, shows that path  
The path of righteousness

That roots out evil,  
Among the humanity.<sup>35</sup>

Acalāmpikai Ammaiyār wrote an historical epic in 3000 verses narrating the events of Gandhiji's remarkable life. Rāya. Cokkalīṅkam besides writing many individual poems, wrote poetical work, *Kānti Piḷḷaittamil*, on the greatness of Mahatma Gandhi. Likewise many other poets composed songs in praise of Gandhi. However, it was Nāmakkal Kaviṇār who gained undying fame as a "Gandhian poet" by extolling the virtues of Gandhism. Nāmakkal Kaviṇār's poems lack emotion and force, the essential features of a poem. But they reflect a refined calmness. This style of composition is eminently suited for paying tribute off Gandhism.

### *Cuttāṇanta Pāratiyār*

Since the early days of freedom struggle Cuttāṇanta Pāratiyār has been writing poems and musical compositions. He has been writing on a variety of themes; some kindle patriotism while others awaken religious fervour among the people. There are other types of poems too which reveal Cuttāṇantar's poetic vision of a new world. His poems are written both in traditional and modern verse forms. His magnum opus is *Pāratacakti Kāvīyam*. He has composed many musical compositions and poetical plays.

### *Murukēca Pākavatar*

Murukēca Pākavatar, who believes in Gandhian philosophy, has been writing verses since 1918. He has composed both traditional as well as modern type of verses. He has also written many musical compositions. Since he is from an oppressed class, he realises the difficulties of the poor and has composed realistic poems about their distress. He has written an excellent and moving poem, "Oh untouchability, there is no place for you in the country, go," in which he has criticised its irrelevance to modern society. He has depicted with stark realism the abject poverty of villagers, especially women who do not have an alternate cloth to wear. Although he has depicted the chill penury of the people, there is no sting in his poems nor a hint for a bloody revolution. On the whole there is a Gandhian tenor in his poem. And this is reflected in the following poem:



Do they have gold ornaments?  
Where is good drinking water?  
Where are those who produce lime to  
whitewash houses?

Where is the auspicious drum?  
Where are the bullock carts?  
Where are the slippers?  
Where is an umbrella?

Where are the brick houses?  
If perchance someone possesses,  
Disturbances would be created  
To tie, to torture  
And to beat him up  
Ho! to beat him up  
for building a brick house!<sup>36</sup>

### Other Poets

Acalānpikai Ammaiyār has written two *purāṇas*, one in praise of Mahatma Gandhi and the other on Bal Gangadar Tilak. Pulavar Kuḷantai has written a lengthy epic, *Irāvaṇa Kāviyam*, eulogizing Irāvaṇaṇ.

K.M. Pālacuppiramaṇiam has written some devotional works as well as *Tiruvaḷḷuvar Pillaitamiḷ* in the traditional poetic style.

S.T.S. Yōki has composed many beautiful poems following the style of poet Kampan. Under the pseudonym, Pāla Pārati, he has written many standard literary poems. He has made some new experiments in writing poetry.

The art of writing poetry comes to Kaṇṇatācaṇ naturally. He has composed hundreds of verses for films. He has written several literary poems, including minor epics like *Māṇkaṇi* and *Āṭṭaṇatti Ātimanti*. Since he writes with powerful emotion and extraordinary simplicity, there is little difficulty in understanding the inner meaning and image of his poems. They move the hearts of readers easily. His powerful expression makes his verses popular among various sections of people. Old literary ideas and images have taken a new form in his poems. He has great ardour for writing sensual poems.

Interesting poems in an easy style are written by Tirulōka Cītarām, Reddiyar, Tuṇaivaṇ and others. Besides poems, N.S. Cītamparam has written many musical compositions. Two of his



poetical works are *Itayakkōil* and *Teyvanalam*. The poetical compositions of S.T. Cuntaram, K.S. Kirusnamurti and Puttanēri Cuppiramaṇiam reflect their patriotism, sense of duty and artistic tastes.

The poems of Vāṇitācaṇ and Kampatācaṇ depict revolutionary ideas with deep feelings. They have also written stories in poetical form. Vāṇitācaṇ's *Tamiḷacci*, *Koṭimullai*, *Toṭuvāṇam* and *Eḷilōviyam* belong to this category. Kampatacaṇ's poems like, *Cūriyaṇum Oru Tolilāḷi* (Sun is a labourer) and *Piccaikkāraṇ* (Beggar) portray rather emotionally his utopian dreams.

Rakunātaṇ has written in a forceful style, with new perceptions and revolutionary ideas. But they are written in the conventional prosody. A classic example is his poem, *Oyntirukkamāṭṭēṇ*, which begins, "There is no rest till the painful misery is rooted out."

A Cīnivācarākavaṇ and K.V. Jakannātaṇ under the pseudonym Nāṇal and Jōti respectively, have written excellent poems in conventional style on traditional and refined themes. The poems of Muṭiyaracaṇ are also written in the conventional manner. His well-known minor epic is *Kāviyappāvai*. Cōmu has composed many devotional and philosophical poems. Some of the poems have a mellowed music of their own. His outstanding poetical works are *Iḷavēṇil*, *Veṇṇilā*, *Poruṇaikkaraiyilē* and *Tārakai*.

Tamiḷalakaṇ's poetical compositions are known for their rhythm. Besides a collection of poems entitled *Tamiḷalakaṇ Kavitaikal*, there are other collections such as *Kalaiccelvi*, *Aṇṇaiyiṇ Kūttu* and *Pirainilā*.

Musicians acclaim Periyacāmit Tūraṇ's musical compositions. His poems are written in a simple and smooth flowing style. Historical stories and important events of the country form the themes of his poems. One of his noteworthy collection of poems is *Iḷantamiḷā*.

Kottamaṇkalam Cuppu has composed songs in folk tunes on important events of the country. Whatever be the event—war, famine or flood—it is described in beautiful verses in colloquial Tamil, in the idiom of villagers. One of his famous poetical works is *Kāntimakān Katai*, which is in fact the life and achievements of Mahatma Gandhi narrated in an appealing manner. Cuppu himself has sung the verses like *Katākalācēpam* on several occasions, on many stages and for a number of years.

Kaviṇar Curatā, on the lines of Pāratitācaṇ has written several

poems embodying his ideas for a new social order. Like Pāratitācaṇ, Curatā is a zealous advocate of social reforms. Despite his reformist zeal, he is essentially a poet with skill in depicting the beauty of nature and portraying the human emotions. Excellent new similes abound in his poems and as such he has been lovingly called as a poet of similes or *Uvamaik Kaviṇar*. His outstanding poetical work happens to be *Tēn Maḷai*. Kalaiṇar Karuṇāniti has composed poems, new in structure and in form with powerful imagination and forceful style. The art of versification has been eloquently used to depict new ideas and varieties of human emotions by poets like Cēturāmaṇ, Rakumāṇ and Cuntaram.

Among the younger generation of poets Vēlavēntaṇ and Taṅkavēlaṇ are in the forefront by virtue of their brilliant poetical compositions. In general, Tamil patriotism dominates the writings of the young poets. Both form and themes are new in most of their verses. Pālacuppiramaṇiam, Vēṅkaṭapati, Cīṇivācaṇ, Caṇmukam, Kuyilaṇ and Māṇikkam belong to this category of poets. Iḷaṅkamaṇ has translated Rabindranath Tagore's *Gītāñjali* into Tamil with the caption *Kītāññali Kīrttaṇaikaḷ*. Tagore's poems have been introduced to the Tamils thanks to the pioneering work of V.R.M. Chettiyar and Araṅkacīnivācaṇ.

Jamatakṇi has translated a Hindi epic into Tamil verse with the title *Kāmaṇ Makaḷ*. He has also rendered Kalidasa's *Megasandesam* into beautiful Tamil poems.

Cālai Iḷantiraiyaṇ who is a competent essayist and literary critic, has brought out many collections of poetical works. Whether the subject matter is nature, the younger generation, evils of old customs, or dreams about a new world order, all of them are presented in a majestic and bold style. One of his excellent collections of poems is *Aṇṇai Nī Āṭavēṇṭum*. Some simple scenes in nature have been drawn into imaginative word pictures in a poem entitled *Aṇṇai Tayai*. One of the verse in that poem runs as follows:

Very great is she  
Mother Nature  
Boundless is she  
In compassion and kindness  
Coconuts she grows that serve  
As swings for little parrots.<sup>37</sup>

Arivuvoli's poems are known for their rhythm and revolution-

nary ideas. Communist ideology is clearly reflected in some of his poems. The following one is a classic example:

Some in mansions high  
Others low in garbage  
To suffer from hunger  
Live in dilapidated huts  
All these can one put up with?  
Are humans to live in ignorance,  
To die in ignorance,  
Lose comforts in ignorance  
To die with blame  
Become low without compassion.

In the foregoing verses (in the original Tamil version) many lines and word endings are similar in length. There is also assonance in many lines. All these poetic features heighten the grandeur of the poem.

Tamiḻoḻi, who died in the prime of life, possessed unusual poetic talent. In his poems emotions and rhythms go hand in hand. His emotions are deep and melt the heart. He has written an unfinished minor epic, *Puttār Pirantār* (Buddha was Born) which depicts the life of Buddha from an entirely new angle. The following poem captioned, *Valippayanam* (Journey) reminds us of the poet's life—how he perished while yet young. It arouses feelings of sympathy and tenderness.

Shoulders weigh me down  
Burden weighs me down  
Long is the journey—this  
Journey is too long.  
Days roll by  
Pace become tardy—It's  
A wearisome journey  
A wearisome journey  
Infirm is the body  
Life force is at low ebb  
Journey to a distant land—this  
Journey to a distant land.  
As the day wears away  
Consciousness diminishes

Life's journey  
Tapers towards its close  
Tapers towards its close.<sup>38</sup>

Nāka Muttaiyā has adopted a new type of versification. Mōkaṇaraṇkaṇ, Cēturāmaṇ, Murukucuntaram and others have also written new type of verses which give hope for the future growth of poetical works in Tamil.

There are some who have been engaged in writing modern verses without bothering too much about Tamil prosody. In their verses lines will be there, simple formation of words like prose will be seen, and certain novel images will be found. Although modern verses have a simple style, the meaning in some of them is difficult to understand, for the emotion is conveyed in a sophisticated manner. C.S. Cellappā, N. Piccamūrṭti, Vallikkannaṇ and others evince great interest in writing modern verses. Some of the modern anthologies of verses are *Kāṭṭuvāṭṭu*, *Valittuṇai*, *Putuk-kural* and *Kōṭaivayal*. Some of the verses in these collections are good compositions by virtue of their simplicity and rhythm. If fine rhythm and realistic imagination could compensate for the traditional art of writing poetry, then poetic excellence could be perceived.

### Folk-songs

Folk-songs have been the basis, strength and the very life of literature. They themselves are full of life. From time immemorial innumerable folk-songs have been in vogue throughout the Tamil country. They can be compiled at least in one hundred volumes, although only ten volumes have been published so far. The volumes compiled by Vāṇamāmalai, K.V. Jakannatan and Rāmaliṅkam of Sri Lanka contain many interesting verses. Āru Alakappaṇ is also interested in this field. All aspects of literature can be found in folk-songs. They are in fact the very basis for the origin and growth of earlier Tamil literature. The emotions of villagers who live so close to nature are reflected largely in the folk-songs. Apart from emotion, they possess fertile imagination and beautiful form. They also contain many colloquial words as well as corrupted words. Their literary merit should not be underestimated because of colloquialism.

Who are your enemies, my dear?  
 Who are your enemies—my dear?  
 Why did you cry?  
 Who has beaten you, my dear?  
 Tell me  
 Who has beaten you!

Whether aunty has beaten you  
 With a bouquet of Jasmine flowers  
 Or uncle has beaten you  
 With hands that garlands you

Whether sister has beaten you  
 With a garland of *alari* flowers  
 Who has beaten you?  
 Tell me and cry  
 I will punish them  
 Who has beaten you  
 Tell me and cry  
 They will be hand-cuffed

Oh my beloved mother  
 No one has beaten me  
 No finger has ever touched me  
 Only of hunger did I cry.

The foregoing folk-song is a lullaby sung for lulling a baby to sleep. The same song is heard with variations in different parts of the Tamil country. Eminent modern poets like Kavimaṇi Tēcikaṇṇāyakam Pillai and Pāratitācaṇ have composed many lullabies which are now regarded as remarkable pieces of literature.

The folk-songs with love themes exhibit a wealth of literary features. The following song addressed by a lover to his lady-love reflects not only the poetic beauty but also poor life of rural folks.

Between circular mill stones—dear  
 Polishing *varaku* rice  
 The colourful sari  
 Swivels round like a fan  
 Who has given—dear

Oh lady in yellow sari  
 With pomegranate-colour basket  
 Emanates from the yellow sari—Oh lady  
 Sweet fragrance of *marukkoluntu*



Weeding montane fields  
Of deep dark colour  
Oh my colourful pea-hen  
Oh my sweet-voiced  
Shall I linger or leave.

The folk-songs apart from describing various human emotions and qualities, depict extraordinary events and changes that occur once in a way. The severity of the 1876 famine in Tamil Nadu is graphically portrayed in the following poem:

Boasted the rich  
That boiled rice  
Wouldn't agree with them  
When famine came  
Behind mud walls  
Chewed tender *Karrālai* shoots

Complained these rich  
Even the sweetened milk  
That nourish their body  
Was not sweet enough  
When famine came  
Drank gluttonously  
Hot stale gruel  
Smearing all over—  
Moustache and beard  
What a sight!

Boasted those gorgeously attired  
Proud of their riches  
That seldom they ate the best of savouries  
When famine came  
Even with great longing  
Failed to obtain .  
The worm-eaten  
Tamarind seeds  
And corn-husk.

The unnatural events had a terrific impact on people's minds. The resultant emotion found expression in marvellous folk songs. These songs in fact exemplify the direct relationship that exist between life and poetry.

With the decline of the Vijayanagar empire in the south, poets

composed more *talapurāṇams* in honour of the presiding deities in temples. Others wrote different kinds of folk-songs like *ammānai* on temple deities. Works like *Rāmappaiyaṇ Ammānai* belong to this category. At the same time folk-tales were versified and popularized among the common man. To this class belong works like *Maturaivīraṇ Katai* (Tales of Maturaivīraṇ) and *Kāttavarāyaṇ Katai* (Tales of Kāttavarāyaṇ).

Some of the versified folk-tales like *Pavalakkoṭimālai*, *Alliyaracāṇi Mālai*, *Ēṇiyēṇṇam*, *Pulanīraṇ Tūtu*, *Minṇoliyāl Kuram*, and *Tiraupati Kuravaṇci*, which are attributed to poet Pukaḷēnti belong to the category of folk songs. One of the interesting works, *Tiraupati Kuravaṇci* in fact narrates a story which is not found in the *Mahābhārata*. According to the story when Draupadi was living under banishment, she proceeded to Hastinapura in the guise of a gypsy, met Duryodhana's wife and forecasted her future. This type of poetic tales catered for the women. There is also a story which tells the circumstances under which Pukaḷēnti composed poetic tales. The story runs that while Pukaḷēnti was clapped in prison, he received some help from the women who passed by his prison cell. To repay his debt of gratitude to them. Pukaḷēnti composed these folk-tales in poetic form. Other works of this category are *Tēcīṅkurājaṇ*, *Kaṭṭapommaṇ Katai* and *Khan Sahib Caṇṭai*.

*Villuppāṭṭu* is also a type of folk-song, which has been very popular from time immemorial in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. *Villuppāṭṭu* is a story told in a poetic form by a group of singers for entertainment. In this group of singers the main singer holds a large stringed instrument in the shape of a bow. The others have other types of instruments, which play a secondary role to the stringed instrument. At first the main singer sings a section of a song with the accompaniment of the stringed instrument, while the others sing some lines of it with their instruments; thus the story will be narrated in the form of a lengthy song. This type of folk-song was composed formerly in praise of village gods. The folk-song *Cuṭalaimāṇ Villuppāṭṭu* is an example of this type. *Villuppāṭṭu* was composed even on national leaders like Kaṭṭapommaṇ who opposed the British Raj.

To preserve these folk songs scholars compiled them into anthologies and brought out some volumes. Others composed new ones imitating the tune and style of folk-songs. Even now some

are engaged in both these ventures.

Creative writers like Kottamaṅkalam Cuppu, Curapi, and Tirulōka Cītārām have composed new types of folk-songs following the folk tradition. Their works portray important events of the country as well as the violent changes wrought by nature.

### *Poems for Children*

Forty years ago two eminent scholars, K. Namaccivāya Mudaliar and Maṇi Tirunāvuccaracu Mudaliar wrote stories and poems for children and included them in text books. Up till now many scholars have been writing specifically for children, following the norms set by these scholars.

Many children's songs were in vogue in the country. They were mainly sung in families. It was Pāratiyār and Kavimaṇi Tēcikavināyakam Pillai who elevated the poems for children to standard of literary pieces by their own compositions reflecting noble ideas and emotions. Pāratiyār's songs are popular even today. The following beautiful verses written by Pāratiyār are meant for the benefit of children.

Play and run my child  
Don't be quiet my child  
My child, play with others  
Scold not any child  
  
Like the tiny sparrow  
Move hither and thither  
My child  
Watch those colourful birds  
Be ever gay, my child. <sup>39</sup>

In Auvaiyār's tradition, Pāratiyār has written a work for children entitled *Putiya Ātticcūṭi*. Neither Auvaiyār's nor Pāratiyār's *Ātticuṭi* could be regarded as literature for children, containing as they do many wise sayings which are beyond the comprehension of children. They are written in simple sentences with short and sweet words. Only the form is appropriate to literature meant for children. But their contents are above their level of understanding.

In Tamil there are many books for and about children. There are also many songs like the 'moon song' for children sung in every house from time immemorial. Following this tradition there are

many poets who have been writing for children and contributing to the growth of literature for children in Tamil.

Neither highly intellectual nor deeply emotional themes are necessary for songs meant for children. Children sing song eagerly which express simple or exciting emotions with alliterations and assonances. Undue importance, however, need not be given to the content of the poem but it should have a pleasing rhythm and rhyme. Some words and phrases should be often repeated like "Tattānki Tattānki Taṭṭum Piḷlai" and "Kaivīcammā Kaivīcu" in poems. They are similar to nursery rhymes meant to induce babies of one or two years of age to clap and swing their hands. These songs have been sung for generations in Tamil families. Even grown-up children of seven or eight years like repetitions of certain rhythms and words in their songs. Songs have been written with enchanting rhythm and rhyme taking note of the child's psychology. Between 1947 and 1952, innumerable magazines were published mainly for children. They contained many simple rhyming poems. Emulating Namaccivāya Mudaliar, Mayilai Civumuttu and other Tamil scholars wrote interesting and easily comprehensible poems. Then came Aḷa Vaḷḷiappā, whose life-mission was to create a body of children literature in Tamil. His songs, poems and tales in poetic form have been compiled in two bulky volumes under the caption *Malarum Uḷḷam*. P. Tūran has to his credit many rhymed verses for children.

Children show abiding interest in birds and beasts. Poems have been written on these themes to capture their imagination. Aḷa Vaḷḷiappā's poems like *Veḷḷai Muyal* and *Aṇil* belong to this category. Similarly Tēcikavināyakam Pillai's poems like, *Kiḷi Kāk-kāi*, *Pacu*, *Kaṭikāram*, *Kōḷi*, *Nāy*, *Ākāyavimāṇam*, *Cycle*, *Pom-maikaliyāṇam*, *Eli Kaliyāṇam*, and *Pacuvum Kaṇṇum* fall under this class. Pillai's poetic style which is known for simplicity becomes still more simpler and sweeter while writing for children. The following poem which expresses children's wonder and awe on seeing a caged tiger in the zoo, touches the hearts of elders too.

Are its eyes, burning torches?  
How frightful they are!  
It goes hither and thither  
With trident, sword and spear  
Twists its tail  
Swings tail end

Goes into hiding  
Ready to pounce on us  
Like thunder it roars  
Is its throat made of iron?  
Don't go nearer  
Ferocious it becomes.<sup>40</sup>

At the hands of Tēcikavināyakam Pillai lullabies, which have been sung by women for generations for lulling their babies to sleep attain a new elegance and beauty. They have in fact portrayed certain high ideals. The following verse is a classic example of one of Pillai's lullabies.

Ārārō Ārārō  
Ārivarō Ārārō  
The sweet Tamil  
Transforms even stones  
Into sweet fruits  
Are you the one  
That threaded  
Tamil words pure  
Into an ornament?<sup>41</sup>

## NOTES

1. Pāratīyār, *Pāratīyār Kavitaikaḷ*, *Tēciya Kīṭaṅkaḷ*, *Pārata Tēcam* (Madras, 1976), p. 21.
2. *Ibid.*, *Eṅkaḷ Tāy*, pp. 27–28.
3. *Ibid.*, *Centamiḷ Nātu*, p. 43.
4. *Ibid.*, *Pārata Jaṇaṅkaḷiṇ Tarkāla Nilaimai*, p. 37.
5. *Ibid.*, *Pōkiṇṇa Pāratattaic Capittal*, p. 39.
6. *Ibid.*, *Varukiṇṇa Pāratattai Vāḷital*, p. 39.
7. *Ibid.*, *Pārata Camutāyam*, pp. 40–41.
8. *Ibid.*, *Viṭutalai*, p. 56.
9. *Ibid.*, *Cutantirap Paḷḷu*, p. 57.
10. *Ibid.*, *Tēcapaktar Citamparam Piḷḷai Maṇumoli*, pp. 67–68.
11. *Ibid.*, *Putiya Kōṇaṅki*.
12. *Ibid.*, *Nāṇappāṭalkaḷ*, *Accamillai*, p. 180.
13. *Ibid.*, *Pāñcāli Capatam*, p. 367.
14. *Ibid.*, *Pāñcāli Capatam*, p. 367.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 373–74.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 384.



17. *Ibid.*, *Kuyil Pāṭṭu*, p. 396.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 418.
19. *Ibid.*, *Palvakaip Pāṭalkaḷ*, *Pāppāp Pāṭṭu*, p. 203.
20. *Ibid.*, *Pāñcāli Capatam*, p. 352.
21. *Pāratitācaṅ Kuyil Pāṭalkaḷ*, 3rd edn (Madras, 1977), pp. 116–18.
22. *Ibid.*, *Pāratitācaṅ Kavitaikaḷ*, Pt. I, 22nd edn (Ramachandrapuram, 1976), p. 156.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
26. *Ibid.*, *Pāñṭiyaṅ Paricu*, 10th edn (Ramachandrapuram, 1970), p. 99.
27. *Ibid.*, *Pāratitācaṅ Kavitaikaḷ*, p. 127.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
29. *Ibid.*, *Alakiṅ Cirippu*, 13th edn (Ramachandrapuram, 1976), p. 5.
30. *Ibid.*, *Pāratitācaṅ Kavitaikaḷ*, pp. 149–50.
31. Tēcikavināyakam Pillai, *Malarum Mālaiyum*, 15th edn (Madras, 1977), p. 15.
32. *Ibid.*, *Āciya Jōti*, 3rd edn. (Madras, 1952), pp. 75–77.
33. *Ibid.*, *Umārkayyām*, 2nd edn. (Madras, 1951), p. 69.
34. *Ibid.*, *Malarum Mālaiyum*, pp. 26–28.
35. Tanikai Ulakanātaṅ (ed.) *Nāmakkal Kaviṇār Pāṭalkaḷ* (Madras, 1960), p. 115.
36. V.V. Murukēca Pākavataṅ, *Tamiḷamutam* (Madras, 1960), p. 60.
37. Cālai. Iḷantiraiyaṅ, *Annai Nī Āṭavēṇṭum* (Madras, 1964), p. 122.
38. C.T. Cañcivi (ed.), *Tamiḷolīyiṅ Kavitaikaḷ* (Madras, 1966), p. 123.
39. Pāratiyār, *Pāppāp Pāṭṭu*, p. 202.
40. Tēcikavināyakam Pillai, *Malarum Mālarum Mālaiyum*, p. 68.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

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